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MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN

Volume II

THE  
CHURCH'S WITNESS  
TO  
GOD'S DESIGN

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# MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN

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# THE CHURCH'S WITNESS TO GOD'S DESIGN

AN

ECUMENICAL STUDY

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150, route de Ferney  
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*First published October 1948*

*Distributed in Canada by our exclusive agents  
The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited  
70 Bond Street, Toronto*

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Northumberland Press Limited  
Gateshead on Tyne*



## GENERAL PREFACE

**T**HIS book, with its companion volumes, was written in preparation for the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, Holland, August 22—September 4, 1948.

Two years and a half in advance of the Assembly, the Provisional Committee of the Council determined that the main theme for the Assembly should be:

### MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN

and that this theme should be considered under four aspects:

1. The Universal Church in God's design.
2. The Church's Witness to God's Design.
3. The Church and the Disorder of Society.
4. The Church and the International Disorder.

These topics were not chosen at random. They represent burning concerns of all the churches in this crisis of civilization. The first reveals the growing determination of the various churches to rediscover the divine intention for the Church, and the right relationship of the various churches to one another. Of that determination, the World Council itself is both an evidence and a concrete result. The second testifies to the obligation recognized by all churches alike to claim for Christ the whole world and all aspects of life. From the outset it has been recognized that the World Council would be still-born unless evangelism were its life-blood. The third and fourth subjects bring Christian faith directly to bear upon two critical areas of disorder in contemporary civilization, the social and the international. They deal with the familiar query: What has the Church to contribute to society in its present extremity?

Preparation of the delegates for the consideration of these issues at Amsterdam was entrusted to the Study Department Commission of the World Council of Churches. Commissions consisting of leading Christians, both clerical and lay, from various parts of the world, were formed to deal with the four topics. Each Commission held two meetings and came together



again on the eve of the Assembly for the final stages of preparation. A volume was outlined on each topic, and writers of chapters were carefully selected. In almost every instance, their contributions have been subjected to searching criticism by the Commission concerned, both individually and corporately, and by a considerably wider circle of experts. In most cases, chapters have been rewritten in the light of this truly ecumenical scrutiny at least once, in some instances two or more times. Thus, the volumes which are here presented represent the outcome of a comprehensive interchange of thought and conviction among leaders of virtually all Christian Communions (except the Roman Catholic). It will be understood that in these circumstances the World Council of Churches itself is not committed to the opinions expressed in the volumes.

But quite apart from its literary results, the process of ecumenical thinking possesses in itself an educational and inspirational value which should not be underestimated. Especially for people in isolated areas of the world, this interchange of documents and comments means an opportunity, eagerly grasped, to share in a vital conversation with brethren from other churches and countries. The wide interest taken in the theme of the Assembly is also evidenced by the fact that several collaborating groups are now preparing similar volumes, dealing with the same set of subjects from a national or confessional perspective.

All these studies are founded on earlier work—the sequence of ecumenical conferences of the past two decades, especially the Oxford Conference on “Church, Community and State” in 1937, the patient enquiries of the Faith and Order movement, the labour of ecumenical study groups in many lands, and the programme of the Study Department of the World Council which continued, hampered but unabated, through all the years of the war.

Serious effort has been made to assure that this discussion be truly ecumenical, representative equally of Christian churches in every part of the world. But difficulties of effective communication have to a considerable degree frustrated that aim. It has not been possible to secure as many contributions as was hoped from the Eastern Orthodox world and from the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This limitation, while real and regrettable, is less grave than might at first be supposed.



For no fact stands out more clearly than that, in the basic problems confronted both by the churches and by the societies in which they are set, ours is in truth one world.

Although the volumes of the present series were prepared to serve the particular occasion of the Amsterdam Assembly, they deal with issues of continuing and urgent importance for the whole of Christendom. It is hoped, therefore, that they may have a wide usefulness beyond and after the Assembly, and they are here presented to all thoughtful people, within and outside the churches, for that purpose.





## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**T**HE World Council of Churches has come into being at a moment of peril for all mankind which is without precedent in the whole of human history. Frustration and fear grip the minds of men and women. This is true not only of the masses who feel themselves caught in a fate over which they have no power, but hardly less of their leaders who hold in their hands the guidance of events which they are unable to control.

At this fateful moment, the theme of the first Assembly of the Council—**MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN**—is singularly relevant and needs little interpretation.

**MAN'S DISORDER** is inescapably manifest in every aspect of the world's life to-day. It is not merely a result of the recent war. Before the war, the sickness of civilization was far advanced. The disappearance of common standards, the denial of a law of God above the wills of men and states, the disintegration of family life, the dissolution of community, loss of faith save the false faith in human wisdom and goodness, emptiness and meaninglessness in the souls of men—these symptoms of sickness were clear enough. At almost every point, war and its aftermath have aggravated **MAN'S DISORDER**. And now has been added the greatest dread of all, that man's mastery of atomic energy fore-shadows the annihilation of man and all his works.

The Church carries a large share of responsibility for **MAN'S DISORDER**; and it is for that responsibility that the churches must give account. This is true: if the churches had been faithful to their commission from Christ, if they had spoken the word of truth committed to them, if they had rightly interpreted to the world the causes of its sickness, if they had ministered to the world grace and power, above all if they had manifested in their own life the only true medicine for the healing of the nations—if they had done all this, humanity might not have come to its present extremity. On the contrary, **MAN'S DISORDER** finds its most pointed expression in the disorder of the Church itself.

We live in an age when the Christian Church in many parts is rediscovering its divine mission. But precisely at that moment it discovers its own weaknesses. To men whose deepest need is spiritual rebirth, it has not exhibited the power of the Spirit.



To a world whose deepest need is community, the Church which claims to be the Body of Christ, professing one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, has presented division and disunity. These are sins for which the Church is responsible to God and to man. Its first act must therefore be, not condemnation of the world, but confession and contrition.

In this plight, our only hope lies in GOD'S DESIGN, His design for the world and for the Church.

GOD'S DESIGN is the divine purpose for men and nations, manifest in the acts of God in Christ. In His life, death and resurrection, in the coming of the Church and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a new beginning has been made in human history. In Him, God has begun a work of new creation and redemption. In Him, a reign of love and forgiveness has been inaugurated, moulding the hearts and lives of men, calling them to find their common centre and desire in Him, and so to discover that real community for which mankind is longing. In Him, the Church is continuously reborn from death to life. In Him, there is also revealed GOD'S DESIGN for the ordering of human society, a design that is an act both of judgment and of redemption.

Adopting MAN'S DISORDER AND GOD'S DESIGN as the theme for its first Assembly and as the title of the present series of volumes, the World Council of Churches has committed itself to a double task. It must seek to comprehend MAN'S DISORDER in the light of GOD'S DESIGN, in order that the churches may mediate to the world both a true understanding of its distress and the grace and power to find a way out. And it must bring the churches to face, with relentless realism, their involvement in the world's folly as well as their own distinctive disorders, in order that they may be ready to receive from God the rebirth and true unity which He purposes for them.

HENRY P. VAN DUSEN |

*President of Union Theological Seminary  
Chairman of the Study Department Commission*



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## CONTRIBUTORS

- BENNETT, Frank, Rector of Wigan, Lancashire, England.
- BRUNNER, Emil, D.THEOL., Professor of Systematic Theology, Zurich.  
Author of *The Mediator, Justice and the Social Order*, etc.
- HORTON, W. M., PH.D., Professor of Theology, Oberlin. Author of  
*Can Christianity Save Civilization?, Our Christian Faith*, etc.
- KRAEMER, Hendrik, D.TH., Director-general of the Ecumenical Institute, Geneva; formerly Professor in the History of Religions, Leiden; Missionary in Indonesia. Author of *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World*, etc.
- MAURY, Pierre, D.D., Professor of Dogmatics, Protestant Faculty of Theology, Paris; Vice-President Reformed Church of France. Author of *Trois Histoires Spirituelles, Le Grand Oeuvre de Dieu*, etc.
- NEILL, S. C., Assistant Bishop to the Archbishop of Canterbury; Co-Director Study Department, World Council of Churches; formerly Bishop of Tinnevely. Author of *Christ, His Church and His World*, etc.
- NEWBIGIN, J. E. Lesslie, Bishop in Madura, Church of South India; formerly Missionary of the Church of Scotland. Author of *The Reunion of the Church*, etc.
- PAUCK, Wilhelm, D.THEOL., Professor of Historical Theology, Chicago. Joint author of *The Church Against the World*, etc.
- SAVARIMUTHU, S. C., Church of Sweden Mission, Chidambaram, S. India; formerly Professor, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Madras.
- TILLICH, Paul, D.D., Professor of Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York. Author of *The Religious Situation*, etc.
- VICEDOM, G. F., Missionsinspektor an der Missions-Anstalt, Neuen-dettelsau; formerly missionary in New Guinea. Author of *Die Mbowamb, Die Kultur der Hagenberg-Stämme im östlichen Zentral-Neuguinea*.



## THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION

### PREFACE

*The scope of this volume is to some extent determined by its length. The compilers, faced with the alternative of either attempting a comprehensive survey, in which each section would have to be so short as to exclude all illuminating detail, or of taking merely a selection of relevant material to illustrate problems and enterprises which could not be described in detail, without hesitation chose the latter course. This volume is no more than an introduction to the study of contemporary evangelism. The reader will at once become aware of omissions. For instance, in section VI, nothing is said of Islam or Confucianism or of several other great religious systems. Even the three sections which are printed deal only with a small part of their subject. One of the reasons for the adoption of this method is that, although ancient religions manifest a large measure of stability, much change is going on within them, and no fair statement can be made about the real religious significance of these systems at the present time, without deep research into materials not easily available. But equally in the sections dealing with the Western and partly Christian world, the study has been episodic rather than thorough, and all that has been attempted has been to give glimpses of deep-rooted problems and of evangelistic enterprises which show that the Gospel has not lost its old power to win men and to transform them.*

*Nevertheless, this is in some ways a pioneer volume. For the first time it has been recognized that the problems of the proclamation of the Gospel in East and West are fundamentally the same, and that old distinctions are out of date. The effect of this book may be rather to raise questions in the mind of readers than to answer them; if so, its real purpose will have been achieved, since this volume is only one of the first stages in a continuing process of study of evangelism in the modern world, in which all readers of the book are invited to participate. It is hoped that a more thoroughly documentary study may later be published in the series *Ecclesia Militans*, edited by the Study Department.*



## A WORLD TASK

by *Hendrik Kraemer*

**W**ITHIN the scheme of the general theme: "Man's Disorder and God's Design" of the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Commission II is assigned the task of treating as its part the subject: "God's Design and Man's Witness." In other words: evangelism, the proclamation of the Gospel to all men, in all lands, in all situations and civilizations, in all conditions and circumstances, to and in all spheres of life; witnessing to God's redemptive order in Jesus Christ, by word and deed, in the situation of the revolutionary world of to-day. This is literally a task of world-wide dimensions.

The sixteenth century witnessed a rise of the great missionary movement, that rose from the Roman Catholic Church in accompaniment to the first wave of political and economic penetration of Europe in Asia and America. In the eighteenth century began the great missionary movement of the non-Roman churches, which has been one of the characteristic marks of modern church history, one of the saving features amongst the many weaknesses and failures of the Church in its reactions to the revolutionary changes of modern society. It cannot be said that this growing missionary enterprise, although an expression of the essential apostolic nature of the Church, had its real roots in the churches. It was mainly carried on by groups of people, who were gripped by the vision of the missionary obligation towards the unevangelized world. William Carey, the cobbler, wrote in 1792 his "Enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the Heathen", proclaiming to his fellow-Christians the self-evident duty of the Church in terms of a new message and a new appeal. This missionary movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the response of a band of men and women to the appeal that came to them from the increasing widening of the geographical, cultural and religious horizon, resulting from the growing contact between east and west. In other circles it aroused a vast intellectual



curiosity, but in those Christian men and women it called forth a deep evangelistic fervour, kindled by imagination, vision and a passion for self-sacrifice for Christ's sake. The most universal and pointed expression of this attitude is to be found in the words, ascribed to Wesley: "The World is my Parish." In the mouth of the great pioneers of the eighteenth century, this dictum was the terse formula of their faith, hope, love, and obedience, of their spontaneous understanding of the essential nature of the Church.

If ever there was a time to live and act by the vision laid down in these words "The World is my Parish", then it is undoubtedly the time in which God has placed us. It is simply forced upon us by the dramatic contemporary situation. We are not living in the age of discovery of new continents, civilizations and religions, which were at the first contacts stable and static bodies and structures of life. We have grown into a close and fatefully interrelated world-unity and have passed from static stability into a universally revolutionary situation. Primitive tribes, ancient oriental civilizations and societies, the modern Western world in all its parts and aspects, are at present living through crucial conflicts, tensions and anxieties, which are world-wide in character, extending to all phases of human life, mutually conditioning and influencing each other, for good and for evil. Everywhere the unity of life is shattered to the core because of the collapse of old certitudes and the throwing away of old bondages. Everywhere there is a restless and painful searching for new foundations on which a new integrated unity can be constructed. The clash of these endeavours for reintegration results in an unimaginable amount of strife and suffering. The universal disintegration of society and its ensuing demoralization releases everywhere demonic forces, leading to terror and wanton oppression. Everywhere rival faiths and secular gospels, in the East as well as in the West, are competing for the allegiance of man, or want to make him their subservient instruments. Everywhere the problem is or becomes acute: is religion relatedness to a world of transcendental realities and values, a necessary part of human life, or is it an antiquated stage in the evolution of the race? This question lurks behind modern secularism, behind the pretension of science as a competitive force and triumphant substitute for religion; also behind the ideal of a man-made "Good Life". At the same

time dreams about the necessity and possibility of a new humanism, which is really universal, resulting from the meeting of the great cultural traditions, embracing the whole of mankind and constituting the basis of world-understanding, are dreamt by some of the most representative and sensitive minds from the East and the West.

This staggering and seething humanity of to-day, in its perilous quest for the reintegration and unification of life, challenges the churches all over the world. On account of it the Christian churches find themselves in an unparalleled missionary situation, not only in the "non-Christian" world, but as emphatically in the so-called "Christian" world. In comparison with the eighteenth century, the new feature is that as a result of the *élan* of the missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Church has become a body which, according to its nature, is not only *related* to the whole world, but is also *represented* all over the world. Older and younger churches, notwithstanding their different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds, and atmospheres, are virtually in the same position and dealing with a common situation. It is a well-known experience in international gatherings of Christian leaders, when they meet at present out of their common concern for the responsibility of the Church in the world of to-day, that they instantly discover this essential unity of their problems, hopes, and anxieties. The term "world-wide" is therefore fully justified. It has an urgency and depth as never before. The churches everywhere face the task of evangelizing a world in every respect in revolutionary transition, of proclaiming its message and asserting its peculiar character in environments, partly hostile, partly indifferent, partly open-minded.

That there is a world task confronting and waiting for the churches is a plain fact. Far more important is the question *whether* and *how* the churches will respond to this challenge. This stupendous task cannot be met, as in the eighteenth century, by far-sighted individuals and by groups whose heart is afire. It will only be taken in hand and carried out when the apostolic nature and obligations of the Church are grasped realistically and effectively understood and loved as the given privilege and task of every member of the Church, of every church and of the churches together. In all three respects we are still in the stage of initial discovery of those truths and re-



quirements, which are essential and self-evident marks of Christianity and the Church. We begin to understand that the vast multitude of lay-members of the churches is the greatest potential force the churches, humanly speaking, have, in carrying out their commission to witness to the power of salvation and renewal of life that is in Jesus Christ. We begin to understand that only rarely as yet are the churches as churches really shouldering their missionary privilege and responsibility towards their peculiar environments and towards the world at large. The consciousness of this inescapable duty is growing. There are springing up in many places endeavours to embody this new awareness, which have to be acknowledged with great gratitude. This growing awareness impels many minds towards the necessity of searching for a new understanding and a fresh interpretation of the biblical message of God's design for man and the world. God in His mercy is using the perplexingly confused state of the world to awaken in the Church the anxiety for the rediscovery of its own nature and its *raison d'être*. Yet, on the whole, the churches as churches still remain far more complacent about their own situation and the situation of the world than they have any right to be. This complacency in itself is a sign that the churches sorely need a new awakening to the revolutionary character of the Gospel. They cannot exercise any spiritual leadership in the present revolutionary world if they do not manifest a readiness constantly to reform their own ways and attitudes, in obedience and openness to the revolutionary forces that emanate from the proclamation of God's estimate of human standards and human conditions. The coming Assembly, in confronting the churches with the world task that is pressing upon them, will have to seek ways and means in order to impress upon the churches the inescapable duty of assuming, humbly but confidently, this world task. This certainly will not happen if the prevailing complacency and self-centredness are not felt as a capital sin against God and the world.

We hardly begin to understand that the only adequate response—adequate to the essential nature of the Church—to the task of the proclamation of the Gospel by word and act, by prophetic guidance and sacrificial love, in this disrupted world, is that the *whole* Church is responsible for the whole world. The unprecedented call to world-wide evangelism, showing that God's purpose in saving the world means affirming His Lordship

over all conditions of life, and therefore demands from us Christians the readiness to pioneer in entirely new directions—this call is at the same time an urgent appeal to the churches to start a fierce battle for victory over the too readily accepted ecclesiastical provincialism in which they are moving and living. It is a mighty call towards “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”, towards envisaging the task as a common task, as a God-given opportunity to become awake to the obligation of discharging this task as a manifestation of the ecumenicity of the Church in the world.

If by God's Grace the coming Assembly is the beginning of a resolute, realistic and obedient facing and assuming of the world-task by the Church, still one essential condition has to be fulfilled, without which all our intentions will appear in the end as confidence in our own human powers of decision, wisdom and courage. This essential condition is that God may grant, through the Assembly, an awakening of the spirit of unceasing prayer through the churches all over the world. “With God all things are possible”, the renewal of the Church and the performance of a humanly speaking impossible world task; provided we sincerely and humbly believe that prayer is the greatest and most efficacious power that God in His mysterious wisdom has entrusted to us. It is the sole legitimate Christian answer to the feeling of impending disaster, that dominates the minds of men at present, and threatens to create a sense of unreality in talking about a world task in a world that, seemingly, hastens to self-destruction. God only knows whether the time for the Church to fulfil its task will be short or long. Our speculations and forebodings, however justified they may be by the trend of world events, never can be the right point of orientation for the behaviour of the Church. It is only to be found in the identification of the Church with God's solicitude, for the world, Who so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.



# THE DUTY AND AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

*by Lesslie Newbigin*

## I INTRODUCTORY

**T**HIS paper has the strictly limited purpose indicated by its title. Preaching the Gospel is not the whole duty of the Church to the world. The Church has the duty to do everything which is summed up in the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". That duty is inherent in the nature of the Church no less than the duty to preach the Gospel. The Church—acting corporately and through its individual members—has to go out to men where they are, in their need and pain and bewilderment, to get under their loads and help to bear them, to find men where they lie wounded, bind up their wounds and bring them home. It has also to do what is in its power—corporately and through its individual members—to bring all the common life of men, their economic and political systems, their family life and their social customs, under obedience to Christ. And the Church has to do these things, not with an eye upon possible conversions, but because these are the things love must do. The present paper does not deal with these things, simply for the reason that the subject of the paper is "The Duty and Authority of the Church to preach the Gospel".

It is true that these two elements in the Church's duty to the world must not be separated; the preaching of Christ will be vain if it comes from men and communities in which the signs of Christ and love are lacking. But equally they must not be confused. When they are, two results follow: the distinctive work of telling the good news of a redemption wrought for men in Christ is obscured; attention is deflected from the evangel to the evangelists. On the other hand, the Church's works of love lose something of their spontaneous and disinterested quality and come to be assessed primarily for their value in winning converts. I would plead that we shall understand and discharge both parts of our duty better if we are willing to think as clearly

as we can about each part separately. This paper deals with one part only.

But while the word "evangelism" has become in current use too broad a term to describe the subject of this paper, "preaching" is perhaps too narrow. In normal use it describes only the act of speaking in public before a congregation. It has also acquired—in English at least—a strong flavour of moral exhortation. Let it be said at once that we are not called upon to consider either the duty of every Christian to be a public speaker, or the duty of the Church to provoke to good works. We are to consider that part of the Church's duty which is described in the New Testament by the words *kerussein*—to proclaim, or herald, the good news of God's act in Christ—the *euangelion*. The most characteristic and vivid form of this activity is the public speech of an evangelist before an audience of his fellow-men; but only a false view of Christianity argues that the duty of proclamation laid upon the Church is in this precise form laid upon each member. "Are all evangelists?" asks the Apostle. All are not, and are not meant to be. And yet the duty of evangelism is a duty laid upon the whole Church. It follows that there is a duty laid upon every member of it to take his proper part in that task. There is obviously room for discussion about the relation of the duty of the individual Christian to the duty of the Church in this matter. But the primary purpose of this paper is to exhibit the source and nature of the duty and authority given *to the Church* to preach the Gospel.

## II THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY IN THE WORD MADE FLESH

The duty and authority of the Church to preach the Gospel derive from Christ, and from no other source. If we are asked "by what authority?" we can only answer—in the last analysis—"In the Name of Jesus."

In the Incarnation of the Son of God the story of revelation moves forward to its decisive chapter. Here we have no longer only the prophetic word bearing witness to God, but God Himself present among men in a life, death and rising again which perfectly reveal His nature and effect His will. Yet even here, and from the very beginning, the preaching of the word is at the heart of His ministry in the flesh. At the very outset of the Gospel according to St. Mark, we read that "Jesus came into



Galilee preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel.'" There is no point—even at its very beginnings—where the Gospel is something other than a thing preached, a *kerugma*. The preaching of the first Apostles was the continuation of that which was the beginning of the Gospel, namely, the fact that Jesus came into Galilee preaching. It was the continued burning of a fire which, from the moment of its first kindling, possessed the quality of fire—namely, that it burns. "The Church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning" (Brunner). It is not only that the Word became flesh and that the Church was commissioned to proclaim that fact: it is also that the characteristic act which ushered in His ministry in the flesh was the act of preaching—of heralding the gracious act of God. When Jesus sent out the disciples as apostles to preach the Gospel, He was sending them not to begin something new, but to continue what He Himself was doing.

The question of authority arose at the outset. He spoke "as one having authority" (Mark i, 22). His teaching was contrasted with that of the scribes. We know how they taught: they spoke "from the authorities", quoting tradition and precedent. Jesus spoke "as one having authority" in Himself. By the form (e.g. Matt. v, 21-2, 27-8, 33-4, 38-9, 43-4; vii, 29; xix, 8-9; and many passages in St. John) and content (e.g. Matt. x, 32-40; xi, 25-7; xviii, 19-20; xxv, 31-46; xxvi, 64; Mark viii, 38; ix, 41-2; xii, 1-12, 35-7; xiv, 24; John v, 16-18, 19-27; vi, 28ff.; viii, 12ff.; ix, 35-41; x, 9ff.; xi, 25ff.; xv, 1, etc.) of His teaching, by His works of healing (e.g. Matt. xii, 28; Mark i, 27; iii, 11; iv, 36-40; Luke vii, 2-7, etc.), by His acts of forgiveness (e.g. Mark ii, 1-12; Luke vii, 48-50) and by His calling of men to follow Him (Matt. xi, 28-30; Mark iii, 13ff.; John vii, 37ff.), He revealed the consciousness of possessing an authority derived from no human source but committed to Him by His Father. By so doing He confronted men with the necessity of deciding to accept or reject it. One who speaks "from the authorities" does not confront men with such a challenge: he requires no more of them than that they should test what he says by the standards which they already recognize as ultimate. But Jesus confronted men with a new ultimate: they had to decide for or against *Him*.

The duty and authority of the Church to preach the Gospel spring from this authority which was in Jesus Himself. This

is not to deny that we have to do much preliminary work in order to make men feel that the Gospel is for them. In approaching any particular group of people with the Good News we have to relate our presentation of it to the place where they stand. We have both to state the Gospel in the language of the hearer and also to show his precarious foothold. Later chapters in this volume will attempt this task. But the basis of our authority to preach the Gospel does not lie in the fact that we can demonstrate—at least to our own satisfaction—that Christianity is superior to other forms of belief, ancient or modern. If we ourselves approach the Gospel, or encourage others to approach the Gospel, as the best among possible cures for human ills, we are bound to misunderstand it. The Gospel is news of God. It is not something offered to man for scrutiny and comparison with other ways of salvation. It is something much more formidable than that; it is the message to men that their Creator has come to them in judgment and mercy, to lay hold of them and make them His in the perfect fellowship of His eternal joy. The Gospel can only answer the needs of twentieth-century man if the Church which is entrusted with it recovers the sense that the Gospel is not primarily the answer to men's needs. Whatever is said in the proper place about the strategies by which we seek to bring home to men this tremendous message of God's saving acts, we must be clear that the mission which we have—its obligation and its authority—comes to us from that meeting with God in Christ and from nowhere else. Our purpose is not to deal with the immediate practical issues of evangelistic approach to twentieth-century man in East and West, but to explore the Gospel itself in order that by facing Christ Himself afresh we may hear and understand anew His command to go and make disciples of all nations.

We have to avoid the error of citing the authority of Christ after the manner of the Scribes and Pharisees, and so using His Name but reversing His method. By refusing to cite "authorities" and by confronting men with His own unique authority, He placed upon men the terrifying responsibility of discerning between truth and falsehood. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" He asked (Luke xii, 57). He assumed that, by God's Spirit, they could recognize Him for themselves, and the evoking of that recognition was in a sense His supreme task. For the Church merely to cite His command



to preach the Gospel is, therefore, not enough: it must in each new generation so learn Christ that it may feel the constraint and hear the command afresh through the Spirit, and that it may know with what authority it faces a world whose rules obstinately question its right to speak.

### III WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

In the New Testament the earliest and simplest statement of the Gospel is "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand". To understand these words we have to look both before and after. We have to take account of God's dealings with Israel, recorded in the Old Testament, and of the marrow of Jesus' words, unfolded in the record of His teaching, acts, death, resurrection and ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. If we neglect the Old Testament background, we shall read into the words of Jesus the meaning they have for us in the twentieth century. If we focus our eyes on the Old Testament we shall be blind to His eternal meaning. While Jesus necessarily began with the words His hearers knew, His message so far exceeded the limits of their understanding and expectation that they finally rejected Him as an impostor. We have to go on from this first bare announcement—"The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand"—to see what manner of fulfilment God gave to the cherished hopes of His people, and what manner of kingdom it was that had come near. For this we have to turn first to the preaching of the Apostles in the earliest days (e.g. Acts ii, 14-36; iii, 12-26; iv, 8-12; viii, 32ff.; x, 34-43; 1 Cor. xv, 1-8) when, filled with the Holy Spirit (the authentic sign of the new age), they were at last able to read all the strange experience which had befallen them since they were called from their nets to follow the new Teacher. We find here the essential pattern of the Gospel preaching, and we can trace the same pattern in the "Gospels" in which the record of Christ's words and works has been preserved for the use of the Church, and in the later creeds in which the Church has sought to crystallize the Gospel message. When we study this early preaching and these records, we see that the Gospel is the proclamation of a series of events in history which have been—from their first dawning—proclaimed to be decisive for human history and for every individual. "The time is fulfilled . . . Repent and believe."

Presupposed in these words of our Lord there are at least these three fundamental doctrines: the doctrine of God as Creator and Lord of the world and of time, Who has power to announce the end of one age and the dawning of a new; the doctrine of men as His children, made in His image, yet ranged in a common rebellion against Him; and the doctrine of the election of Israel as His people, and their long preparation for the fulfilment of His reign. Christ's own announcement, as wrought out in His words and deeds, can be described as that of something accomplished and of something impending, of something to be received and of something to be hoped for, of redemption and of consummation. Under these five heads then—Creation, Fall, Election, Redemption and Consummation—we shall seek to make clear the sources in the Gospel of the duty and authority of the Church to preach it.

A. *Creation.* The message with which the New Testament opens presupposes the firm monotheism of the Old. When Jesus spoke and acted as He did, it was plain that the Kingdom of which He spoke was the Kingdom of the one Creator of all things and all men, the Almighty, the Eternal, the All-Holy. What also became plain was that Jesus Himself claimed to be the King. In the context of a pantheistic or polytheistic religion, the manner and matter of His words might have been interpreted as the manifestation of religious genius or sainthood as these are understood in these contexts. But in the world in which He lived and moved, no such interpretation was possible. He confronted those who heard Him inexorably with the alternatives of calling Him blasphemer or else of acknowledging that in Him the Creator Himself, Very God, had indeed come among men. The Old Testament has no place for demigods, and Jesus can accept no such place. The authority with which He meets us is the authority of our Creator, imperiously demanding unconditional surrender. Yet unlike the absolute claims made in the name of men or of human institutions it does not destroy the frail yet priceless treasure of our rational and moral integrity. He leaves us free to reject Him if we will. The absolute surrender which we know ourselves bound to make to Him is not extorted. And when we give it, we know that we have not lost our freedom but gained it. These things are so just because Christ's authority is the authority of our Creator Himself, the authority upon which our rational and moral integrity rests. It



is because we have been made by Him and for Him that our hearts and minds can find rest in Him alone.

But if this be true for us, it is true for all men. It is an integral part of that doctrine of creation which the words of Jesus presupposed, that man is made in God's image. Without pretending to explore this doctrine, we may assert that man has been so created that he finds his true self only in a free response to God. This is the note of humanity everywhere and always, marking off man from the rest of creation. When therefore we say (as we must) that Christ's authority is that of our Creator, we are saying that it is as true for all men as it is for ourselves, that they can only recover their true humanity by a free surrender to Christ. If we deny this (either by our theory or by our practice); if we think and behave as though there were any created person to whom the Gospel message is not relevant, we deny the deity of Christ and treat Him as though He were but a sectional or tribal demigod.

This point is central if we are to claim the right to preach the Gospel, from civil governments which deny it. It is not simply that we believe Christianity to be the true religion and therefore desire to propagate it. Others have the same conviction about their own religions and have deduced that a minority has the right to demand freedom to preach because the state ought not to prohibit the propagation of truth, and a majority in power has a right to put obstacles in the way of other religious communities because the state ought not to encourage error. In so far as Christians fall into this error, and use the political power available to them to deny freedom to religious minorities, they forfeit the grounds upon which they can rightly claim freedom when they are themselves in the minority. These grounds are the belief that all men are so created in God's image that they can only find their humanity in a freely given obedience to Him, and the belief that in Christ the Creator of all men has come among men in order that through His redeeming work all men may be enabled freely to give that obedience. Jesus Himself, in the days of His flesh, placed upon men the responsibility of themselves making the ultimate decision about their destiny—the decision of faith. He scrupulously protected men's freedom to reject Him. These facts ought to be a perpetual reminder to the Church of the true grounds for her claim that the state should respect the freedom and responsibility of every

man to make the decision of faith.<sup>1</sup> There are times when the Church can only assert her claim by the witness of her martyrs. But she disastrously compromises her claim, and casts away what her martyrs have won, if she uses political power to deny to men their freedom to reject the Christian revelation.

B. *The Fall.* At the heart of the Old Testament revelation, which is the presupposition of Jesus' first announcement, lie the twin doctrines of Creation and the Fall (Gen. ii, 4-17; iii, 1-19). Man is what he is because he has refused that for which he was created. That "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Ps. xiv, 3; Rom. iii, 9ff.) is the common conviction of the Old and New Testaments. That is not to say that the distinctions which we properly draw between good men and bad men, between just causes and unjust causes, are obliterated. On the contrary, they are felt with the deepest intensity. But over all, over humanity as such, over all men and all their works is written "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return", and this sentence is traced to a primal rebellion against God the Creator, a rebellion in which man and his whole history are therefore involved. Among ourselves we may distinguish better and worse; in relation to our Lord and King we rank as members in a gang of rebels. The fissure that runs right through our human nature between what we are and what we ought to be is the result of our denial of that responsibility to God in virtue of which alone we are human. Our predicament is set vividly before our eyes in the Passion story, where we see the Son of God utterly alone, tried, condemned, cast out, crucified; and ranged against Him not the rabble only, but the chosen leaders of the noblest religion and the most august political order which the world had known. The whole human race is represented in the drama of Calvary. There all men without distinction stand condemned as enemies of the Most High. There, for the same reason, they stand as objects of His grace Who so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son.

But this, it must be repeated, does not mean that distinctions are obliterated. There are bad and good men under every sky. There are higher and lower religions. There are nobler and

<sup>1</sup> I do not forget that there are many forms in which the issue of the freedom of the individual *vis-à-vis* the state is being pressed on our world. I speak here only of the freedom of religious minorities to profess and propagate their faith. Where this specifically religious freedom is denied, all other forms of freedom are in danger.



baser elements in every religious community. These distinctions are real. Otherwise the Crucifixion of Jesus would be a meaningless episode. The power to recognize goodness and its constraint upon the conscience are at least part of what is involved in our creation in the image of God; they are the heritage of all men in every time and place. What, then, is the relation of the Gospel to goodness as it is found in men apart from Christ? By what right do we preach the Gospel to men who are—it may be—better than ourselves?

So far as the answer is covered by the doctrine of the Fall of man, the clue is found in St. Paul's analysis of the relations between Law and Gospel:

(a) Whenever the Gospel is preached, it is preached to people who are already in some sense under law. If there were a people to whom the distinction of right and wrong was unknown, even in its most corrupted and debased form, it would be impossible to find in the language of that people words in which to preach the Gospel. But where there is a distinction between right and wrong, there is the knowledge—however dim—that right is what *ought* to be done.

(b) The Gospel, while it presupposes the law, is not built upon it. Law rests upon a true apprehension of the Will of God, but the attempt to fulfil the law leads men into deeper estrangement from God. This paradox is the measure of human sin. Man, while refusing to accept that utter dependence upon God which Creation connotes, is haunted by the knowledge of that for which he was created. This knowledge drives him to the attempt to realize the purpose of his creation under conditions of his own, not God's. This attempt drives him into still more profound estrangement. The Pharisee becomes the arch-enemy of the Christ. The publican and the harlot go into the Kingdom first. The Gospel of a reconciliation with God which is free because no righteousness could earn it, is a scandal to those who have most zealously sought a righteousness which could. The good men in every religion, those most sensitive to the perfection of Jesus, are often at the same time the most bitter opponents of the preaching of the Gospel.

(c) The Gospel fulfils the law (Matt. v, 17). That is to say, it produces the moral fruits which the law demands but which

dutiful obedience can never produce. All duty is summed up in the duty to love God and our neighbour, yet we cannot love as a matter of duty. That we should love God and our neighbour is indeed God's perfect will for us. That we apprehend that will as a command going counter to the inclination of our own nature is the measure of our rebellion against God. When we make it our business to fulfil the law of love, we end in the tragic impasse of pharisaism. God's perfect will is fulfilled in us when love—spontaneous and self-forgetting—becomes the inmost law of our being, when we can say "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, yet no longer I but Christ liveth in me"; when—in other words—we are re-born in Christ and He is formed in us. This new life is the fruit of the Gospel—a life lived in faith, "the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii, 20. Cf. Rom. x, 4-9).

The relation between Law and Gospel is thus not simple. The good non-Christian is both nearer to God and farther from Him than others. The duty and authority of the Church to preach the Gospel to every creature rests on the fact that it is in Christ alone that God has provided the mercy-seat where man's total rebellion is judged and pardoned. The Church disastrously obscures this fact, and compromises her missionary claim, when she permits within her own life ways of thought and devotion which encourage reliance upon anything other than the full, final and sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross. She has to be perpetually on her guard against the very natural and human tendency to put traditions of piety, dogma, and ritual into the place which belongs to Christ alone. When she does this, she assimilates Christianity to the world religions, and obscures the uniqueness of the Gospel with which she is entrusted and by which she lives. Her inner life has for ever to be tested by the apostolic warning, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi, 14), and her missionary effort by the word, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. iv, 5). There is ample need for deep shame and humility as we face the task of preaching Christ to men better than ourselves. There ought to be no room for doubt as to our obligation to do so.

C. *Election.* It is the common teaching of the Old and New



Testaments that Israel is the people of God, chosen from among all the nations of the earth to reveal and effect His will for all mankind. It is the teaching of the New Testament that the Christian Church is the re-constituted Israel. Even at the height of his polemic against those who sought to bind upon the Church all the ordinances of the old Israel, St. Paul never forgets the continuity of the Church with Israel. He speaks of Gentile Christians as slips of wild olive grafted "contrary to nature" into a good olive tree—that "green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit" which is God's Israel (Jer. xi, 16; Rom. xi, 13-24). It is only in the light of God's revelation in Christ that the real meaning of His calling of Abraham and of Israel is made clear (cf. Eph. ii, 11; iii, 10). The Church alone is the true Israel, the seed of Abraham (Gal. iii, 29), in which Israel's history is understood and Israel's calling fulfilled. The preaching of the Gospel is indissolubly linked with the existence of a people called and set apart by God to be its bearers.

This unbroken link between a Gospel claiming to be the final and universally valid truth of human existence and a particular human society, a particular strand chosen out of all the complex web of human history, is offensive to the majority of those in our time who rightly seek to understand human history as one whole. It seems to involve an intolerable confusion between the particular and the universal. Yet we have to insist that this element of particularity is integral to the Gospel message. To demand that the doctrine of God's universal love be dissociated from the history of a particular people is to expect it to conform to the pattern of general propositions or laws which are typical of human reasoning. To demand that the knowledge of God's universal love be available to all men equally is to expect that I should know it without the actual experience of meeting my neighbour. General propositions even with regard to the love of God do not take a man one step outside the circle of the self. It is possible to combine enthusiasm for the doctrine of universal brotherhood with inability to live in brotherly concord with anyone. Profound mystical experience is compatible with profound egotism. But love is a relation between persons which breaks that circle of egotism. It involves commitment to and dependence on another. It is thus not chance but inner necessity of love's nature, that the Gospel of God's love should reach us in the form of an invitation to join a particular human fellow-

ship. God's purpose of love must be worked out through election. The Church is not something which we create to embody our response to God's love; it is God's Israel, the body which finds us and brings His love to us. If we believe that God is love, we must believe this; if we resent it, we make the history of the human society on earth ultimately meaningless.

We may thus say that the Church, simply because it is the Church, has the duty and authority to preach the Gospel. It has this duty and authority because God has chosen it for this thing. He might have chosen some other race to be His Israel, some other persons than us to be His Church. But in fact He has chosen us. If we fail to preach the Gospel to others we flout the purpose with which He chose us to be the unworthy bearers of it.

This is not to deny that God is at work in manifold ways outside the bounds of the Church—every missionary knows in what wonderful ways men are prepared for their meeting with Christ in His Church (cf. Acts x, 1-8)—but it is to assert that the clue to all God's dealings with His human family is to be found in the Church, the particular, visible, historical society in which men and women are bound together in the communion of the Holy Spirit, and which grows through history by holding up Christ before men in Word and Sacraments, and by ministering His love to them in its common life. Reconciliation with God is at the same time reconciliation with His reconciled children (cf. 1 John iv, 20). Incorporation in its life is incorporation in the divine life which the Son shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Eph. ii, 11-22; John xvii, 20-3).

Of course the churches as we know them are far from answering this description of the Church. While it is of the essence of the Church to be a distinct, visible, historical society existing alongside other human societies, it ought not to be a society marked by any particular human characteristic, but simply humanity reconstituted by its redemption in Christ. The only peculiarity of the Church among human societies ought to be this relation of its members to God in Christ. The stumbling-block of the Cross ought to be the only stumbling-block with which it confronts the outsider. Churches are particular societies in the wrong sense. Every addition to the Church's creed beyond what is strictly required to safeguard the truth of the Gospel itself adds one more stumbling-block and further obscures its true character. Disunity is both the effect and the



fruitful cause of the erection of such stumbling-blocks. Each denomination becomes marked by peculiarities of its own and weakens its claim to be the new humanity in Christ offering reconciliation to God through Him. I do not forget that these divisions have arisen, in part at least, precisely out of men's desire to safeguard the truth of the Gospel, or that reunion can only come by a common return to that truth. My purpose is to emphasize the connection between the duty of evangelism and the duty of reunion. The Church, because it is the Church, has the duty and authority to preach the Gospel. The Church's disunity is a contradiction of its own nature and the abdication of its authority to declare to all men the Gospel of redemption.

D. *Redemption.* The Gospel announces an accomplished redemption. The Church has the duty and authority to preach it because it is the redeemed community. The Church's evangelism is not only its obedience to the command of the Lord, it is the passing on of that divine life which it has received from Him. The duty and authority to preach the Gospel are implicit in that sharing in the divine life through the Holy Spirit which is the constitutive fact of the Church's existence.

The Church's life, the life hid with Christ in God, is a sharing in the divine life. The New Testament speaks of the Church as "a colony of heaven" (Phil. iii, 20—Moffatt's translation). Its citizens have been "translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. i, 13). They "taste the powers of the age to come" (Heb. vi, 5). They are "justified by faith". But the Church does not enjoy all these blessings as a possession apart from God; it enjoys them in that, and in so far as, it lives by faith in the Gospel. It is when the Gospel is heard and believed, when the redemption accomplished on our behalf on Calvary is the sole ground of our confidence, that the love of God becomes the law of our being. When a man understands what it means that Christ died for him, he cannot any more live for himself. The life he lives is a gift of God's mercy. He has no ground of hope save in the death and resurrection of his Lord. The citadel of egotism has fallen and all the defences men erect against their Creator are down. Then alone is a man's soul laid fully open to the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit. Then alone, therefore, he receives the life for which God created him—a life of freedom and fellowship with God and with His children. The Church, just in so far as it lives by faith in the

Gospel, truly shares in the divine life and tastes the powers of the age to come. Because this is so, the Church's duty to preach the Gospel belongs to its very nature. "One died for all" (2 Cor. v, 14). It is of that constraining love that the Church is born and lives, and the same constraint must necessarily lay upon the Church an ambassadorship for Christ to all for whom He died. The Church cannot stand under the Cross without accepting an obligation to share with all men the redemption which was there won for it. It cannot evade that obligation without cutting itself off from the divine life by which it lives.

The Church is the bearer of the Gospel in two distinguishable senses. It is the bearer of it as the guardian of the apostolic witness to those historic events in which our redemption was wrought out. It is the bearer of it as being the redeemed community in which the love of God shed abroad through the Holy Spirit is bringing forth the fruit of good works and holy lives. As the redeemed community the Church will be marked by freedom from selfish concern for its own salvation, and by whole-hearted self-committal to men in all their needs and sorrows and perplexities. It will necessarily concern itself with all men's concerns, for this is what love does. At the same time it will point unceasingly to the secret of its own life, to the facts of God's work in Christ, to the one Name given under heaven by which we must be saved, to the judgment and mercy under which those within and those without alike stand. When these two activities are set over against one another the Church betrays its trust. Preaching divorced from concern for all men's needs will be words set against deeds, for men will not believe the message of God's grace if they do not see signs of that grace in the messengers. Service of men divorced from preaching will be but mocking men with false hopes, for there is no place other than the Cross where men may be reconciled to God, and every man must go there himself.

Evangelism is the activity of the redeemed community seeking to share with all men the joy of redemption, and to welcome all men into the fellowship of those who share that joy. Much harm has been done in this matter by a wrong kind of individualism. The human agent in evangelism must be the fellowship. Whether the immediate agent at any particular juncture be the oratory of a great preacher, or the simple act of a group of Indian villagers going out for their "week of witness", or a word spoken



in personal talk which bears witness to Christ as Lord, evangelism must surely always be recognizably the witness and the invitation of the fellowship of Christ's people. It is the Church which must be the "mission". It is upon the *Church* that the authority and duty is laid to preach the Gospel, for the Church is the redeemed community which itself lives by the Gospel.

E. *Consummation*. An incomparable note of urgency sounds through the first preaching of the Gospel. "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the Gospel." The urgency lies in this, that it is the announcement of something which has happened and which at the same time points to something about to happen. God does not sleep. The promises are not forgotten and they are not idle dreams. History is not a meaningless repetition of cycles; it is real and moves to a real climax. There is not an infinity of time either for the race or for the individual. The Master of the house is at the door and the servants are summoned to awake "while there is yet time" (Luke xii, 35ff.). There is no time to stay and argue with those who will not give heed to the message; the messenger is to leave only the dust of his feet as testimony that the Kingdom of God has verily come near (Luke x, 10-11). The good news of the Kingdom is to be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall the end come (Matt. xxiv, 14). Christians are therefore called upon to throw themselves into this task with the energy born of good hope, looking confidently for the day of Christ's glorious return. The Church has the duty and authority to preach the Gospel because the Gospel is the message that the eternal Lord of history has revealed Himself in history in order to confront man with the final issue of his life on earth.

God's revelation of Himself in Christ is the revelation of the meaning of history as it is in the counsel of God, and those who by faith apprehend the revelation look for the end of history when the secret of God's purpose shall be apparent to sight. This element of expectation is necessarily involved in the possession by faith of redemption through Christ. "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory" (Col. iii, 3-4). To the New Testament writers this expectation was vivid and immediate. The fact that we can now look back on two thousand years of further history ought not to dull the vivid-

ness of our hope but to deepen our sense of God's forbearance. The Gospel brings every generation face to face with the end of history; therefore any true apprehension of the Gospel will lay upon the believer an urgent sense of responsibility to open the eyes of all men to the crisis in which they stand.

There is revealed in the Gospel the meaning and end of history both for the individual and for the race. The one is not exhausted in the other. Both are to be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. The individual is brought by the preaching of the Gospel face to face with his Creator and Lord, and is compelled to face the issues of his life. The offer to him in Christ of complete and final salvation is inevitably at the same time a revelation to him of the possibility of complete and final damnation. The decision of faith is made in this tremendous context. It is not possible rightly to believe the Gospel except with some awareness that these awful issues are concerned in it. It is not possible so to believe it without awareness of its equal urgency for every human soul. Our Lord discouraged speculation on the question, "Are there few that be saved", but He made the question an occasion for stressing the urgency of the issues involved in discipleship (Luke xiii, 23f.). It is not possible to be true stewards of so tremendous a message and at the same time to be dilatory in handing it on.

The Gospel is at the same time the revelation of the meaning and end of history as a whole. It is the revelation of God's age-long secret, His purpose to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. i, 10). Of this purpose the Church is the first fruit and the agent (e.g. Eph. iii, 10-11). The Church lives now by faith, and it is only to the eye of faith that it appears as the Body of Christ and therefore as the centre of world history (cf. Eph. i, 22-3). But faith eagerly awaits the day heralded in Christ's first preaching when faith shall be lost in sight and the Kingdom of God shall be revealed in glory. Until that day the Church must confess before the world the faith by which she lives, and so play her part in hastening that day's dawning. History moves to a real climax, away from the social equilibrium which belongs to man's natural inheritance, and towards the final crisis where heaven shall stand nakedly revealed and men must enter on their heavenly inheritance or perish. The Church is bound by her own faith to take history seriously, and in this hour of history when on the one hand the sin of man threatens the utter destruction of



human life, and on the other the Church has been granted a new vision of her world-wide unity, Christians will look up in hope knowing that their redemption draws near. This is an hour when the Lord is forcing us to see the whole destiny of the human race in the light of His eternal purpose, and when there is laid upon the Church, through which He has willed to make His purpose known, the duty and authority to proclaim to all men His saving acts. "Behold, now is the day of salvation."

# II

## OUR UN-CHRISTIAN WORLD

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### PREFACE

*For some years it has been clear that the Church has been losing hold in the ancient Christian lands, and that its losses here have not been compensated for by the gains in lands of the younger churches.*

*Why has the Church thus lost ground? Perhaps because it has come to rely on other things than the presence and power of its Master—security, property, the support of secular powers. Perhaps also because it has forgotten that it is always face to face with an urgent evangelistic task, and that the Church cannot survive unless each generation as it arises is brought to the knowledge of Christ.*

*When Christian faith fails, the mind of man does not remain a vacuum. Man is an idol maker; if he ceases to worship the true God, it is certain that he will make other gods out of his own imagination. One chapter in this section tries to depict some of the gods worshipped by modern man, systems of thought which have taken to themselves something of the passion and power of religious faiths. But deeper than these consciously held doctrines are obscure convictions on the level of the half-conscious and subconscious; these may be, and often are, contrary to the Christian conception of God and man, and toughly resistant to them.*

*In face of a world entrenched in its own conceits and unwilling to be won for Christ, only a genuinely Christian Church can be effective. The tragedy is that the Church itself has often been infected by the worship of false gods and the spirit of the world, thus making its proclamation of the Gospel ineffective. If the world is much less Christian than it ought to be, much of the responsibility can be laid at the door of the Church itself.*



## RIVAL SECULAR FAITHS\*

by *Wilhelm Pauck*

THE International Missionary Conference, meeting at Jerusalem in 1928, sounded the warning that, as all over the world religion was confronted by secularism, Christian missionaries should recognize that the Christian Gospel must be proclaimed in a world where the validity of every historical religion was being challenged. Since then the echo of this warning has been heard wherever the churches have discussed their evangelistic task.

The present plight and temper are read in terms of a "crisis of religion". Everywhere people have become alienated from the historical religions. The "modern" spirit of western civilization is regarded as the chief cause. The scientific world view and the feats of scientific technology in the conquest of natural powers and resources entail a gradual estrangement from the Christian Faith. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, first the educated classes and then the masses tend to leave the churches or to ignore them. The expansion of western science and technology throughout the world has corresponding influence in non-Christian civilizations.

Many who concern themselves with the problem assume that they are face to face with a movement of mass-atheism. They think that when people left the churches they became godless and that in their godlessness they live and die without any concern for their own salvation or for the salvation of mankind. But this is not so. Though alienated from the churches, modern secularists are not necessarily irreligious. From the Christian point of view, their "religion" must be judged idolatrous. But it expresses itself in an earnest quest for a coherent understanding of man and the universe and for the meaning of life. Indeed,

\* This paper is based on discussions held by the *Chicago Ecumenical Study Group*. Several sections taken from papers by members of the group have been incorporated in it. The final draft of this article was prepared by Professor Wilhelm Pauck, the chairman of the group. It should be stated that the group as a whole could not be convened in order to approve this *résumé* of their discussions.

“secularized” modern man is in search for a faith upon which human existence can be staked and which can direct human destiny. Certain world views, which promise the realization on this earth of the age-old human hope for the good life, have already found millions of ardent adherents. Proclaimed and taught as “realistic” analyses and interpretations of the world as it actually is, they engender a loyalty which is often stronger than that by which Christians are attached to the Gospel of Christ.

Thus in confronting secularism, the Christian Church in fact meets “secular faiths” which claim to be its rivals. It would be going too far to say that Christianity is challenged by “rival secular gospels”, for these secularized movements do not appeal to their followers in the name of “good news” to be declared as the hope of salvation. But it is right to consider them as alternatives to the Christian Faith, for they carry the conviction that life can be so ordered that everyone will be able to live well and happily.

In a brief analysis of the most influential of these “faiths”, we shall not attempt to trace their historical origin or to evaluate them critically, either on their own presuppositions or in the light of Christian doctrine. It will be our purpose so to describe them that their attraction for so many can be understood.

In order to prevent possible misunderstandings, we should point out that some of the world views we are about to characterize are not in all respects incompatible with the Christian faith. However, we are here not concerned with the problem of the inter-relation between the Christian Faith and the world views. We shall therefore discuss the “secular faiths” not in the light of the question to what extent and under which conditions the world views represented in them are reconcilable with the Christian Faith, but we shall analyse them solely in the light of the fact that they are held by many people of to-day, who, having been estranged from the Christian Church, embrace these “faiths” as alternatives to the Christian Gospel.

## I

Most of the secular faiths are, in one way or another, humanistic: they centre all that is worthy of loyalty on factors



or aspects of the human world. But because humanism is a movement in its own right and because its world view is widely advocated, we must treat it specifically.

Several kinds of humanism have flourished in western civilization. All of them were inspired by the ideal of *humanitas* first developed in classical antiquity. The contemporary movement is not unrelated to historical humanism, but it derives its primary impetus from the modern scientific spirit. It is, therefore, commonly referred to as *scientific humanism*.

In so far as modern humanists are concerned with ends, they assert, like their predecessors of old, that the goals of human life must be found in the nature of man. In so far as they are concerned with the means by which these ends can be realized they affirm that they are available in the natural abilities of man and in the energies and resources of nature which can be made accessible to these abilities. On the achievements of the natural and social sciences they base their hope that at length men will overcome all those frustrations which have dogged their search for happiness.

Scientific method applied to the processes of nature and to human society, so the humanists believe, has demolished the main tenets of Christianity. Especially the supernatural and other-worldly features of historical Christianity are superstitions to be buried in the cemetery of human errors with other myths that in the course of human evolution and development have rightly been exploded. The science of man will provide in the course of time not only objectively tested knowledge about all human capacities of body and mind, but techniques for their full development. What biology, physiology, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and particularly the science of medicine, have already accomplished in interpreting man's nature and its possibilities as seen against the background of evolution must be broadcast by scientific education, that all may share in the benefits of scientific human culture.

Humanists pin their hope on the further development of technical skill, which they regard as an extension of the scientific spirit. The technological progress of the last two hundred years proves that scientific knowledge will enable men really to achieve the greatest good of the greatest number. Modern machines have made it possible to provide all with the necessities of the good life. For the first time in history an economy of abundance

instead of an economy of scarcity is in sight; the good life, a life free from poverty, drudgery, disease, ignorance, fear, and misery is now within the reach of multitudes; a future of universal peace and happiness is no longer a Utopian dream.

Already a general improvement of morals and manners has been accomplished wherever the scientific-technological spirit has been permitted to mould human life. Where machines have produced abundance, in western Europe and North America, people have become cleaner, more gentle, more reasonable, and more friendly. There cultural opportunities abound and millions can take advantage of them. These nations are the most powerful, the most enlightened, the wealthiest in the world, as the envy and emulation of other countries demonstrate.

To be sure, it seems that technological progress has in part served to aggravate the ills of mankind. The frightfulness of the two world wars was enhanced by the horrible efficiency of mass destruction. That these wars broke out at all must apparently be explained by the economic convulsions into which the nations were driven by the technological needs of men and markets. In the age of atomic energy, inaugurated by the annihilation of large cities by two small atomic bombs, future holocausts may destroy all civilization.

But the humanists contend that these conflicts were due to the fact that the nations have not yet learned properly to use their new power. The dangers inherent in atomic energy will disappear if men will accept a planned economy and a planned political order comprising the whole world. For thus the destructive possibilities of released atomic energy can be forestalled and its immense promise of good developed and distributed.

Civilization is about to enter a new age. It is the dead weight of the past that still paralyses the intelligence of men in every part of social life, but particularly in religion, morals and education. The inertia of traditional ideas, habits, and value-judgments holds up the building of a scientific culture. So too often political and economic decisions do not conform to the one world of technological progress in which men do exist and must exist. As there is no substitute for intelligence equipped with scientific method and technical skill, men must work patiently and methodically to explore the maladjustments and disorganizations of society. They must exercise imagination and creative



daring to perfect the fabulous possibilities for good offered to them in the man-controlled technological world.

## II

The *democratic faith*, the working creed of many church members in the U.S.A., Great Britain, the British Dominions, and the Scandinavian nations, represents a modification of the humanist faith. Its outlook is determined by the confidence that man is able to master himself and his world. In this respect they share the general conviction of the humanists concerning the character and promise of scientific-technological civilization. But it is the cause of democracy that elicits their primary loyalty and is the source and substance of their hope; a political actuality and an ideal not inconsistent with Christianity. They hope, all over the world, to build a house to shelter the activities and decisions of the common life on a basis of equality, with freedom of enquiry, of criticism, and of action.

These ideals have developed historically on the soil of Christian civilization. Indeed, the majority of modern Protestants regard the system and order of democracy as more easily reconcilable with the Christian ethic than other political forms of government and social order. We are dealing here with secular "democratic faith" and not with the Christian interpretation of democracy.

"Democracy" may be a term used by particular national states or groups within these states as the ideological symbol cloaking the pursuit of special interests. Yet the ablest and wisest defenders of this faith see democracy as the one political and cultural means of checking national and group interest and achieving a genuine freedom and equality under law for all groups and peoples. Originally an individualistic faith, expressed in economic, political and ecclesiastical theory and practice, democracy has increasingly envisaged a more organic doctrine of society in which responsibilities and collective functions are stressed as fully as individual rights.

Democracy can adjust itself to new situations and new demands. Politically, democracy has always involved some type of constitutionalism with legal guarantees of the rights of individuals and minorities, provision for free discussion and free elections in which the will of the majority (with proper safe-

guards) determines the decisions of the group. Yet the democratic faith cannot be limited to the practices of democratic governments, the forms of election and parliamentary and judicial institutions. It insists that the right to criticize those in power must be preserved and all purely arbitrary authority rejected.

This aspect of the democratic faith presupposes a certain view of human nature, namely that "the greatest natural resource of any community is the latent intelligence and good will of its members; and it seeks those forms of society which run a certain risk of preliminary disorder in order to elicit that resource".<sup>1</sup> With this belief in the latent good will of the people, and supplementary to it, must be ranked the restraints in systems of checks and balances set up as barriers against the abuse of power. So Walt Whitman defended democracy: "I do not put it (democracy) on the ground that the People, the masses, even the best of them, are in their latent or exhibited qualities essentially sensible and good, nor on the ground of their rights; but that, good or bad, rights or no rights, the democratic formula is the only safe and preservative one for coming times."<sup>2</sup>

Those who believe in democracy not only as a form of government but as a faith depend heavily on the spread of knowledge, particularly upon the methods of scientific enquiry as offering the model and the chief resource for the increase of intelligent co-operation. One strong group says: "The democratic faith is in essence the belief that human resources may become adequate for human needs wherever freedom of enquiry exists and co-operative techniques are developed."<sup>3</sup>

This group holds that questions about the *ends* and *values* of life are open to such enquiry, and the problems concerning them are soluble by this means, if at all.

To sum up, the democratic faith is essentially a faith in the worth of every person so that each individual is equal before the highest demands of the moral order; it is a faith in the capacity of men through intelligence and good will to relate themselves to one another in search for a co-operative solution of

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Hocking, *The Lasting Element of Individualism*.

<sup>2</sup> Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, Viking Press anthology of Whitman, p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scientific Spirit and the Democratic Faith*, N.Y. Kings Crown Press, p. xi.



their common problems. Its programme is: give the people a chance, through education, which provides the methods and information by which truth may be discovered; through institutions, economic, political or social, which encourage freedom and co-operation; through public discussion of differences; and through the methods of disciplined scientific enquiry. So they will achieve whatever good life in a world community may be possible in this not wholly pliable nor yet wholly intractable universe.

### III

The "democratic faith" assumes that individual freedom of opportunity guaranteed by freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc., will produce a co-operative society of men who will also enjoy freedom from fear and want. To these freedoms must be added that of "free enterprise". Indeed, the democratic faith described is the outlook of the Western world of the capitalistic bourgeois.

Critics of democracy point to the tensions engendered by capitalism. Freedom of opportunity is so far from being guaranteed, that the good life cannot be attained until society is rebuilt, and until the principle of capitalistic free enterprise in particular has been recognized as irreconcilable with the democratic faith in the freedom of all men.

*Socialism* has found millions of adherents all over the world, but particularly in Western society, by spreading this criticism of capitalism among the working classes. The outlook is humanistic and democratic, but radically distinguished from that of the scientific humanists who believe in the productivity of unfettered human intelligence, and from that of the democrats who put their trust in the latent good will of free men. Socialism advocates a social-economic revolution. Some socialists (e.g. the British Labour Party and the Social Democrats of continental Europe) hope to effect this revolution gradually within the framework of the modern constitutional states, but the *communists* (now organized in the International Communist Party under Soviet Russia) look for the violent overthrow of all non-communist governments in order that a dictatorship of the proletariat may be established.

The communists regard themselves as the true representatives

of the doctrines of Karl Marx who was the first to proclaim the modern socialist programme. This programme is based on certain fundamentally simple economic theories which can be easily understood, and have become the basis of the communist faith.

The marxist-communist criticism of the "democratic faith" and, indeed, of all "humanistic faiths" is that they are not based on a realistic knowledge of the processes of social change. According to Marx, the basic feature of any civilization is the system whereby the people in that civilization produce clothes, houses, and all the material goods which they need. This system must necessarily be determined by those who control the means of production. As long as society is divided into classes, that class will be in power and rule the other classes, which controls the means of production. Moreover, because human life is determined by economic productivity, all so-called values of civilization (e.g. religion, art, philosophy) are nothing but a superstructure erected upon the economic order. As long as economic power is in the hands of one of the classes of society, civilization will therefore be necessarily distorted. It cannot reflect the good of the whole. As a matter of fact, all historical civilizations produced as they were by societies divided into the unequal classes of masters and slaves, property owners and dispossessed workers, must be interpreted as designs by which those in control endeavoured to justify their possession of power and to perpetuate it. Especially religion has been used persistently (primarily by virtue of the alliance of the priests and clergy with the ruling classes) to hoodwink the under-privileged. Its teachings and its practices must therefore be suspected of being nothing less than the opium of the people.

A just order can come into being only by the abolition of social-economic classes. Only a classless society can guarantee true human freedom, where all will have the opportunity to realize material prosperity and cultural well-being. Only such a social order can develop an honest and free human civilization.

Modern bourgeois society is dominated by the owners of capital, the chief means of production in an industrial society. An ever-increasing number of the members of society are deprived of economic control (thus becoming more or less identified with the proletariat) while the possession and control of capital is more and more concentrated in the hands of a few.



These processes make it possible to organize the natural class struggle in such a way that the proletariat can be prepared to seize power and to establish a dictatorship whose task it must be to inaugurate the classless society on the basis of a complete socialization or collectivization of the means of production.

This programme cannot fully succeed unless it is put into action all over the world. The establishment of a communist state in one nation can and must be only the beginning of a world revolution. It is therefore necessary that the workers of the world unite. They must be made class conscious and aware of their responsibilities in the class struggle. In particular, they must be immune to the narcotic influence of capitalistic ideologies, through knowledge of the economic determination of history and the philosophy of dialectical materialism. Moreover, they must be taught to accelerate the irresistible process of decay to which capitalism is subject, by undermining the working of the capitalist order from within. Finally, they must be prepared to seize power at the opportune moment.

To-day, the communist faith has adherents all over the world. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, which has succeeded in establishing a proletarian dictatorship and maintaining it against enemies from within and without, they prepare themselves for the day of freedom from capitalistic oppression which, they firmly believe, will inevitably come. They are united under the strict discipline of their party and are ready for all the sacrifices that may be demanded of them. Dogmatically confident that their faith will change the world for the better, they stand ready to challenge all other faiths.

#### IV

Interpreters of Russian communism have often noted that its leaders did not unite the Russian people in the war against Nazi Germany under the banner of the communist world revolution, but by appealing to their national consciousness and to their love of "Mother Russia". At the end of the conflict, Stalin decreed that the victory over Hitler should be commemorated for ever as "The Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945".

Those who are convinced that *nationalism* is the faith which determines human destiny, see in this fact a proof of the validity of their conviction.

Nationalism does not pretend to be a universal faith. It is avowedly pluralistic. It does not claim to unite men in a programme of world transformation and human betterment. It is a faith that arises from the recognition that human destiny happens to be so ordered that different groups, societies and states are held together by the bond of membership in specific nations. By virtue of the working of an almighty providence, each of these nations is endowed with a common spirit that manifests itself identically in all stages of the national historical development and thus binds all individual members of the national community into a unity which transcends the past, the present, and the future. As it is the fate of each individual to be born into a specific nation, to live well and responsibly means to identify himself with its life.

The nationalist does not hesitate to accept the lesson of history that nations rise and fall; but he asserts that as no man can choose to which nation he shall belong, conscious cultivation of membership in the nation must be the fundamental law of everyone's life—whatever the strength or weakness, the youth or the age of his nation. Each nation has its own particular task to perform—a task which can be learned from history and from the study of the national genius. Every man must live for his nation.

The spirit of nationalism is akin to that of patriotism. Indeed, it feeds upon the natural attachment to the home and the home-land. But if it is not seen in connection with the historical background from which it has arisen, it cannot be understood as "modern man's other religion" to use Edward Shillito's words. Nationalism has become an attitude of mind marked by the readiness to place the nation above every other interest. In two world wars nations compelled to fight for their survival demanded complete and unquestioning support. War propaganda was developed along nationalistic lines. It had the effect of determining the decisions and affections of millions of men in such a way that their nation was given priority over anything else.

The Nazis exploited all this to the utmost. What others did in fact, but without openly demanding a transvaluation of conventional values, they dared to proclaim as the first commandment to be followed by all Germans: Germany is eternal—therefore all other values are secondary to and derived from this



primary one. All over the world a similar spirit prevailed, but German nationalist absolutism was unique because it was so thorough-going.

Historically it is no accident that nationalism became man's other religion, for it developed in close connection with the Church, and, in the course of the nineteenth century, it became the Church's successor as the chief guarantor of social unity within the limits of a given national state.

Since the days of the Roman Empire, indeed since the beginning of political history, religion has been regarded as the surest cement of the social group. For centuries all states followed the rule that peace and concord could not prevail among their citizens or subjects without religious or ecclesiastical uniformity. When the modern national states arose—at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation—they, too, relied on religious conformity to maintain social unity and strength. All Europe hailed political success and expansion as religious achievements and regarded ecclesiastical conformity as a national-political requirement. Thus, most modern nations grew up in dependence upon the social unity maintained primarily by the churches. Everywhere, national self-consciousness was saturated with ecclesiastical motives and loyalties.

Nationalism as a political maxim, entailing a nation's right to independence and expansion, emerged only in the nineteenth century. At first, it was a reaction of Europeans to Napoleonic imperialism: the "nations" must be free from the yoke of the emperor! Later on, it inspired constitutional restraints on royal absolutism: the "nation" must determine its destiny! Finally it became the chief motive of that economic expansion which accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism: the "nation" must have a place in the sun!

At the same time, the ideals of the American and French revolutions spread. Democratic rights and liberties were gradually established all over the western world. Foremost among them was the freedom of religion. Thus the age-old requirement of religious conformity as the basis of unity was abolished. The modern states adopted ecclesiastical neutrality, granting the right to free religious association. At last the churches ceased to serve as the main instruments of social and political conformity.

However, the need to cultivate cohesion in political com-

munities continued. It was satisfied by means of nationalism. In all western nations—and soon almost everywhere—national history was made one of the chief subjects of study in primary and secondary schools. Historical research into national traditions flourished. Commemoration of the anniversaries of national heroes fostered the spirit of nationalism and bound communities together in the bonds of a common destiny.

By the beginning of the twentieth century nationalism had everywhere grown so strong that neither the Christian churches nor international organizations of labour and other interests could prevail against it. Even after the second world war, which was fought to break a party which exploited nationalism to the utmost, it survives, for everywhere multitudes are persuaded that unless nationalism can provide solidarity, the historical states and communities of the world will be dissolved in chaos. On this spirit all those popular movements thrive which are organized to enable special interest groups in society to gain their ends. Our own generation has witnessed the phenomenon of a totalitarian régime like that of Mussolini, designed to exploit the weak and disintegrating Italian nation for the purpose of satisfying a demagogue's dreams of grandeur, able to maintain itself for two decades, because it was based on the nationalistic loyalties and memories of the Italian people. And if it were not a tragic fact, it would seem incredible that the whole world became involved in the bloodiest of all wars because a "revolution of nihilism" like that of Hitler and his party succeeded in legitimizing itself in the eyes of the proud and cultured German people by appealing to its nationalistic spirit and by causing its youth idolatrously to worship the German nation as if it were divine.

## V

There is nothing unusual in the fact that different programmes of action in pursuit of the good life vie with one another for support from the people of our time. But it is most extraordinary that the movements we have been describing are supported by many who believe that the programmes of these movements are valid substitutes for Christian teachings or that they represent a religion of their own. None of these movements originated in a religious concern. Their founders, if they had any, did not intend to inaugurate new religions. That they



have nevertheless become pseudo-religions and as such rivals of the Christian faith is the most disconcerting fact of our time. How can this be explained? We shall not attempt to assess the responsibility of the Christian churches. It must suffice that the question why secular enterprises and programmes have become "faiths" cannot be answered rightly if the failure of Christians to live up to the demand and the promise of the Gospel is evaded.

The fact with which we are all confronted, whether we are Christians or not, is that the fundamental sanctions on which Western civilization has been founded have disintegrated. For this is the crisis of civilization, that when people desire to justify the character of civilization they find themselves standing before an abyss of meaninglessness! When they enquire into the ultimate motives of their actions, they discover that there is nothing that they really believe in, or that convinces them as ultimately trustworthy. Thus they give themselves with frantic and absolutist devotion to concrete programmes that seem to them to promise a reconstruction of the cultural life. Philosophical or social-political programmes originally designed to deal with specific problems of the cultural life are embraced as if they were gospels. It is for this reason that humanism, democratic idealism, communism, nationalism have become religions for many modern men. To elude the futility that threatens the cultural life, they sanctify the world views that underlie these programmes by an idolatrous perversion of the true character of these movements and of true religion as well. One must, therefore, suspect that this pseudo-religiousness is not really an escape from futility, but a concession to it.

This suspicion is supported by the fact that fanatical nihilists have again and again exploited the pseudo-religiousness of secular programmes for their own ends. The leading Nazis were such nihilists, and they found followers by fanning the flames of a perverted nationalism and a perverted humanism. There are other nihilists who exploit the religious fanaticism of some communists for their negative ends.

The danger of this association of nihilism with pseudo-religion is that when the creed is reduced to the status of a temporary programme of action, the disillusionment of its victims is so radical that they identify themselves with nihilism itself. They conclude that it is better to hold frankly to a stark nihilism than to cover it with the cloak of pseudo-religiousness.

The most terrible aspect of the life of contemporary civilization is that this is precisely what is happening. The total destruction which "total war" has heaped upon millions of persons has entailed also the dissolution of all faiths. Loss of family, home, work, the collapse of all conventional order, the failure of artificial programmes, the spectre of continued and unrelieved hunger and poverty, and the apparent hopelessness of the future have caused many to view life as if it were nothing but existence in the abyss of meaninglessness.

Thus it has come about that the prophecy of Nietzsche, who was himself tempted by nihilism, has come true, the prophecy which he formulated in the following terrible words:

"Is it not inevitable that men will finally renounce all that is comforting, holy and healing, all hope and all faith in the hidden harmony of the world, in future bliss and justification? Is it not inevitable that men should renounce God and that, out of cruelty towards themselves, they should worship the stone, that which is stupid and heavy, fate, nothingness? To sacrifice God for nothingness—this paradoxical cruelty has been kept in reserve for the generation about to rise; we all know something about it."<sup>4</sup>

Nietzsche hardly foresaw, even in his darkest forebodings, that this prediction would be fulfilled in the nihilism of our own time. He wrote these works interpreting the cultural mood of his day which he understood more profoundly than most of his contemporaries.

Many of the features of this mood are still alive in contemporary literature, but now its nihilistic implications have become fully apparent. We conclude our analysis of the secular faiths of our time with a brief description of the spirit of negation that is voiced in much modern art and literature.

A variety of nihilistic moods have emerged. They reflect the progressive alternation of traditional beliefs and "mythologies". One feature of the Romantic Movement was the fact that the human being was "left alone, seeking the visible world" (Wordsworth), deprived of other symbolic supports. The effect of the successive impact of "realism" and "naturalism", of the social sciences, and psychology down to our day, has been that even

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Leipzig, 1906, p. 79.



such spiritual support as the Romantics would assign to the soul, to man, and to nature has been cut off (Marx, Darwin, Freud). Then the machine and the pressure of factory life, insecurity due to the impersonal concentration of economic power, and the enticements of money or luxury, have broken the mould of older loyalties, community forms and ceremonies. No longer persons, men become neurotic. Thus suffocation of the individual and personal life has called forth violent reactions, including both revulsions against older faiths, and new irrational cults.

Sophisticated expression of nihilism may be found all the way from the Satanism of certain of the characters in Dostoievsky and the moods of Nietzsche down to the tenets of the logical Positivists and to Bertrand Russell's theme of "building on the foundations of an unyielding despair". Yet the most significant instance of nihilism is perhaps that of the practical man in the street, the lost modern man, who believes nothing and who lapses into sheer debauchery. It sways many young people in the off-hours from factory or from military duty at home or abroad who recognize no claims other than those of coercion or pleasure. They do not say, "I think this is good", but "I like it", or "I want to do it". The argument of such people is that all alleged moral authorities are hypocritical, that science and historical studies have exposed ancient credulities, and that economic life, free enterprise or collectivism, is an arena of "dog eat dog". In this attitude some of their most powerful impulses and desires are inexorably blocked and thwarted. This induces acute suffering, and disenchantment turns to cynicism.

In contemporary neo-mysticism and irrationalism explosive repressed vitalities come to the fore, asserting a positive "gospel" in esoteric and æsthetic forms. They are to be distinguished from nineteenth-century romantic or vitalistic mysticism since they are not founded upon the conceptions of the soul or of nature. They build upon the archetypes and myths designated by contemporary psychology, or, more significantly, upon the sense of the creativity in being itself. Maritain has pointed out, in connection with a discussion of the modern movement in poetry, that the denudation of the modern consciousness of all its older supports has encouraged experiments in "immediacy", in "the creative contemplation of the depths".

Denying, on the one hand, all rational and idealist systems and such conceptions as reason, nature, substance, and, on the other hand, all social authorities, patterns and conventions, Existentialism in its atheistic form comes out with a *tabula rasa*. This "philosophy" which after the war, and as an outgrowth of the war experience, has come to the fore in France, and has found a response among certain members of the intelligentsia of America and Great Britain, is not a complete nihilism. . . . It is not a complete nihilism, because a form of personal consciousness is still acknowledged as real. The category of "existence" is accepted and the category of "essence" is denied. In a world that is absurd man must not proceed on the basis of the certainty "I am" or "I think" or "the world is", but on the basis of the awareness "I act" or "I suffer". The one thing that remains is the will, but in an antinomian field. Emphasis is placed upon the reign of the arbitrary, capricious, the *acte gratuite*. Thus, freedom in a radical way is stressed, carrying with it a sense of emancipation from all ethical systems and tyrannies. But an "ethic" of some sort grows out of it, since it is logical to accord to others that "freedom" which is the ultimate fact about human existence.

These are the "rival secular faiths" which to-day challenge the Christian Faith. No Christian evangelism can be "effective" within our world that does not take the fact into account that the people who are emancipated from the Church have yielded in some way or other to the appeal of these "faiths". And no "witness" to God's "design" offered in the Gospel can be true that has not been chastened by the repentance induced by the criticisms of Christian creed and works revealed in the teachings, programmes, hopes, and moods of the "secular faiths".



## THE DISINTEGRATION OF SOCIETY IN CHRISTIAN COUNTRIES

*by Paul Tillich*

**A**N integrated state of society is one in which creative forces are held in balance by the power of an embracing and determining principle. When this principle is lost, balance is destroyed, and the society disintegrates. Disturbances of social equilibrium are, of course, unavoidable, because the dynamics of every life process involve tension between elements which are static and others which drive ahead. Such tension includes the risk of conflicts, defeats and partial destruction. It is a sign of power and strength when a life-process can stand many deep tensions without disintegration. But there is a limit which cannot be exceeded, and this limit is the preservation of a uniting and balancing principle.

In most Christian countries contemporary society has lost such a principle; it has either fallen into a spiritual vacuum or it has accepted principles which are disrupting instead of uniting. This is the general predicament of our period and the causes of its predominantly self-destructive traits. And the same development which has deprived our society of an embracing and determining centre has to a large extent made it inaccessible to the Christian message. In the past Christianity has furnished the uniting principle; but it has been so infected by the general contemporary disintegration that many now regard it as incapable of reintegrating secular society within Christian countries. Therefore when evangelism undertakes to conquer secularism within Christendom it faces an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, the secular mind is deeply moved by the conscious or unconscious quest for a new spiritual centre. On the other hand, it does not look to the Christian message as the answer to its quest; it regards Christianity as a well-known and well-refuted part of disrupted Western culture. Consequently the evangelist must ask two main questions: First, through what development has Christianity lost its power to be the uniting centre in the life of Christian countries? Second,

how can it become again, in the present situation, the spiritual centre of Western civilization? The following analysis is concerned with these two questions.

#### I DETERMINED AND AUTOMATIC BALANCE

It is obvious that every society represents a "balance of power"—political, social, intellectual, spiritual. Even the most conformist society, primitive as well as developed, involves actual and potential diversities which call for continual integration into the whole of the life-process. The question immediately arises as to what furnishes the balance; and two fundamentally different answers can be given.

In the first case equilibrium is attributed to a determining centre. This "centre" holds together political, cultural and spiritual elements in strict interdependence, and it constitutes an over-arching, all-supporting authority which is acknowledged spontaneously by the "common sense" of the society it unifies.

In the second case equilibrium is attributed to a self-regulating process. Here there is no visible, centralizing authority. Political, cultural and spiritual differences of a fundamental kind can even be accentuated without being looked upon as disruptive, because of faith in an uncentred automatic harmony.

Modern society has made a slow but irresistible transition from the first to the second type of structure. Loss of the determining principles of the European past and maximal acceptance of automatic adjustment of social processes has been the great theme of the recent centuries of Occidental history. The process has been slow, and it has never completely reached its goal; conversely, the centrally determined society of the past was never entirely lacking in divergent elements. But in history the predominant trend is decisive.

The state of contemporary Western society (and, through world-wide repercussions, of Eastern society in some measure) shows that belief in automatic balance is justified only so long as remnants of the first type of structure are consciously or unconsciously co-determinative. When the latter disappear entirely and automatic adjustment is the only means of regulating divergent political, cultural and spiritual tendencies, a process of rapid disintegration sets in, and the need for a new centre



is passionately felt. The success of all so-called totalitarian attempts is due to the fact that they seem to fulfil this need. These attempts are dangerous—and ultimately weak—because the centre they furnish is so biassed that it must be imposed on dissenting groups through terror. Thus the reaction against uncentred automatic balance has led to the complete destruction of balance and to profound disruption in every sphere of human existence. But this reaction must not be evaluated in purely negative terms. Like ancient tragedy, it has a revealing character; it reveals the human situation in the light of the eternal, and it can give to present-day Christian evangelism a point of contact which has been lost sight of for centuries.

## II THE PRINCIPLE OF IMMANENCE AND ITS DILEMMA

“The principle of immanence” is employed as a technical phrase in this article. It is intended to refer to view (*a*) which finds meaning, value and reality exclusively within natural and human processes, and (*b*) which therefore rejects the belief that these processes (and their meaning and value) depend upon a transcendent ground. As such, the phrase covers pantheistic views like Bruno’s and Spinoza’s; but it also includes modern naturalism. Criticisms of “the principle of immanence” offered in the following pages should not be misunderstood as directed against belief in the immanence of (the transcendent-immanent) God.

Furthermore, in this article, the phrase “spiritual centre” is used to stand for the determining centre of society as a whole. Such terminology is justifiable because a centre cannot be established in either the cultural or the political realm without a spiritual foundation from which it derives (spontaneously acknowledged) authority. Even the totalitarian systems have recognized this, despite the fact that they have been anti-spiritual and one-sidedly political in character. They have identified their political organization with the ultimate meaning of life, and they have used quasi-religious symbols in thought and action for the establishment and maintenance of their authority. Thus they have become rivals of those groups, especially the churches, which have preserved a spiritual centre from the past.

Unless a “centre” is basically spiritual, it cannot unify society.

On the other hand, a spiritual centre is not real and has no power to furnish balance unless it is embodied in a political group and expressed in cultural forms. Even the most anti-political and anti-cultural religious ideas cannot escape the latter fact. "Spirit" is the meaning *and* power of communal and personal life, not their meaning alone.

The loss of a spiritual centre in modern society coincides with the rise of the principle of immanence. The causes of this rise are "material" as well as "ideal", and the effects are political and cultural as well as religious. But whenever the principle has gained ascendancy, it has destroyed the spiritual centre of personal and communal life.

The principle of immanence reduces existence to a sum of finite life-centres and their inter-relationships. Each finite centre of being, value, meaning and purpose is conditioned by others; all are transitory and ambiguous in their significance. None is suited to represent an ultimate concern, to evoke an unconditional devotion, to become a spiritual centre determining and balancing all the others. There is no balancing principle in the totality of the finite; there is no power of ultimate integration in the "world".

Thus modern society has been driven into an insoluble dilemma. Either it must rely on the supposedly automatic balance of the finite centres, or it must establish one of them as the all-embracing and supreme power which controls all the others. If it follows the former alternative—ostensibly in the interests of freedom—it is driven into patterns where human values are subjugated to impersonal "laws" of economics and politics. If it follows the latter alternative, it arbitrarily regiments all other finite interests by investing one particular centre (or centres) with absolute power; and when the source of order thus becomes tyrannical, human life is disrupted through either revolt or enslavement.

In our period the second alternative has followed the first, revealing the real depths of the disintegration which attends belief in the principle of immanence and the consequent loss of a spiritual centre. An outstanding contemporary example of the dilemma is seen in the split between American and Russian centres of world power. Everyone recommends a balance between them, but since a spiritual centre which transcends both is lacking, each takes one step after another in the direction of



a "monolithic" structure of world-organization. Confidence in an automatic harmony between finite centres breaks down as soon as any important decision has to be made.

A less spectacular but perhaps even more significant example of the lack of a spiritual centre is to be found in the family. The function of the modern family has become almost entirely utilitarian. It makes provision for sexual relations; it constitutes the smallest economic unit; it guarantees the introduction of the younger generation to some traditional patterns of life; it creates a protective community of comradeship, friendship and love. In all these respects the family still makes an effective contribution towards preserving present-day society. But it has to struggle against great odds. And where there is no uniting principle which transcends utilitarian considerations, the life of the family is at the mercy of the strength or weakness of the factors just mentioned; sexual satisfaction, economic success, mutual sympathy, social protection and adjustment. Since these factors are subject to the tremendous oscillations and insecurities of a competitive society, the cohesion of the family becomes weaker every day. No "enlightened self-interest" on the part of its members is strong enough to resolve automatically the conflicts that arise—especially those which originate in the unconscious.

This leads to a third example: the disintegrating effects of the principle of immanence upon the individual personality. Here the conflict between various unconscious strivings, each of which tries to conquer the centre of consciousness, presents the basic problem of integration. An influential school of modern psychological thought believes that personal integration is possible by an automatic balance of the various personal trends; it assumes something like a pre-established harmony between them. Psychologists recognize that this harmony has been disturbed by external influences, especially in early childhood. But they believe that if the structural effects of these early disturbances are therapeutically removed and the personality is "set free", an automatic process of balancing will begin and the conscious centre will be able to make free decisions unaffected by the compulsive power of morbid strains. From this point of view, a determining spiritual centre is not only superfluous, but even dangerous. It is claimed that the "spiritual centre" in innumerable cases has been a means of internal

oppression and a source of compulsions. That certain theological ideas have been and still are employed repressively is an undeniable fact; *vide* hopeless feelings of guilt before the wrath of an arbitrary Deity, fear of Hell, belief in double predestination, etc. Moreover, the authoritarian, oppressive character of earlier transcendent principles is partly responsible for the movements in modern history which have replaced a spiritual centre by an automatic process. It was the domination of the centralized late-medieval Church which brought about the reaction of the nation-state with its stress upon absolute political sovereignty and reliance on the balance of power. It was the abuse of paternal authority and its ritual consecration by the churches which brought about the reaction, first of the wife and then of the children, against domestic tyranny. An inflexible and unimaginative attitude towards sacred marital laws and the social conventions they safeguard has played a part in fomenting rebellion against monogamy. Finally, the false identification of religion with legalistic demands has contributed to an explosive reaction against repression, and to reliance upon automatic psychological balance, for the liberation (autonomy) of personality. In view of these developments, one can understand why much modern psychotherapy is very suspicious of attempts to re-establish a spiritual centre for personal life. Knowledge of the devastating consequences of religious authority in the past leads to the assumption that such authority will always be arbitrary and repressive. What contemporary psycho-analytic theory largely overlooks, however, is the fact that even the "liberated" personality, like every other, needs a directing and supporting centre. Even when oppressive patterns have been overcome, new forms of servitude—anarchic and eccentric, perhaps, instead of compulsive and conformist—are likely to replace those which have been eradicated. Everything depends upon whether the new centre is partial, and consequently destructive, or whether it is universal, and consequently creative. Only an "ultimate" concern can balance the various conditioned concerns of our personal life. Psychotherapy can help men to reduce internal conflicts, anxiety and hostility; but by itself it cannot furnish goals and values that are free from the distortions of purely personal or cultural pressures. To-day mental disease is most widespread in lands where a strong repressive tradition has been followed by an *uncentred*



secular culture. Psychotherapy has contributed to the removal of repressions, but it cannot remedy, and in some respects it even aggravates, the lack of a spiritual centre.

All these developments are supported by changes in the relationship between man and the realm of "things". This relation constitutes the fourth example of the loss of a spiritual centre under the principle of immanence. It is so obvious, that it has received a major share of attention from interpreters of our time. It can be described as the perversion of means into ends because of the disappearance of an ultimate end. An ultimate end necessarily transcends all preliminary ends; it makes the latter means for something beyond themselves. Thus it is a spiritual centre towards which all dealings with "things" can be orientated. When religion, by presenting an ultimate end in an "other-worldly" way, deprives preliminary ends of their significance, it leaves unused the infinite and almost miraculous means given in the structure of nature and in man's power to understand and control nature. For thousands of years, including centuries of Christian history, the transcendent end prevented the free development of immanent ends and the infinite means for their fulfilment. The victory of the principle of immanence, however, has changed the situation radically. It has liberated man from an animal-like slavery to nature. The discovery of new means has created new ends in turn; and there is no discernible limit to this discovery of new terrestrial "goods" through science. At the same time, however, the criterion of the value of an end has been lost. Man is engulfed in a continuous stream of ends which become means and means which become ends; the waves of this stream come and go without expressing anything unconditional, and without being related to a transcendent criterion. One of the most expressive symbols of this situation is the way in which money can transform itself from a means into an end—the all-pervading end for innumerable people. Man himself becomes a means in the service of "things", and he becomes empty in the process of pursuing one provisional end after another without any ultimate end. Therefore he is ready to accept any ostensibly ultimate goal which is presented with passion and convincing power. But under the principle of immanence no end can really be transcendent and unconditional, though it may appear to be so. And in the struggle to enforce the acceptance of some finite end as

absolute, the immensities of the technological means discovered by science are used for an immensity of destruction. The belief that expansion of scientific control over nature is accomplished by an automatic balance of finite ends breaks down, just as the theory of automatic balance has broken down in politics and economics, in family and community life, and in the psychology of personality.

Out of the break-down emerges the quest for a new spiritual centre which is truly transcendent, unconditional and universal. Evangelism should show the way to an answer.

### III IMMANENCE AND INDIVIDUALITY

The principle of immanence has an implication which deserves special discussion, namely, the "unordered" rise of the individual as individual. Individualization has an ambiguous character. It intensifies, but it also separates. At the human level, the individual possesses freedom and capacity for self-transcendence; thereby man stands at the top of the scale of being. At the same time, human individuality is completely self-related, isolated and lonely. (Self-relatedness is a structural, not a moral-or-immoral, characteristic of man.) To be sure, man as an individual self has a capacity for reunion, love or communion, which is lacking in every sub-human being. This power of reunion, however, is dependent on a reality which transcends the individual self without dissolving the structure of self-relatedness. This reality has been called "Grace" or "Love" (*Agape*) or "the New Creature". It has been the main content of Christian preaching, and it is supposed to overcome the ambiguity of individual selfhood.

Christianity has always acknowledged that the individual self is the bearer of the divine image; but it has not always understood the significance of the individual as a unique mirror of the divine life and as the realization of a unique eternal destiny. Christianity has used its reuniting power for the rejection of the claims of the individual self, and thus it has unintentionally produced the individualistic reaction which characterizes secularism. Secularism, in turn, has lost the spiritual centre in which the individual is liberated from isolation and loneliness. Estrangement of individual from individual characterizes life within the Christian nations. The word "individualism" is not



only outworn, it fails to touch the real point, namely, the tragic isolation of the individual because of the loss of a trans-individual uniting centre.

The individual is strong as long as he lives from a communal spiritual substance, of which he is a unique expression. He loses his power in so far as the spiritual substance is wasted or lacking. Then the following process starts: The individual falls prey to the mass; he becomes an atom within a mass, normalized, standardized, driven by the forces of mass-psychology. The lonely individual hides himself under the pattern of his group. He has no power to resist it. He has no spiritual standard by means of which he can judge the group (and himself). When this happens the situation is ripe for the rise of a few powerful individuals who determine the pattern of the life of every individual in the group of which they have become leaders or dictators. The standardized individuals subject themselves to those who represent their standardized, often unconscious, ideals. Then a collective situation can be created in which the individual loses his temporal as well as his eternal significance. He is not lonely any more, because he has surrendered his individual self and because there is no life-content left in him by means of which he could separate himself from the collective. The anxiety of isolation and loneliness is overcome, but the price paid is sacrifice of individual personality. The rush towards standardization and collectivization within modern society is an indirect quest for a spiritual centre. But the path which is being followed leads to an extinction of the individual as individual, and therefore to a demonic, sub-personal structure of life. This is a tragic consequence of the loss of Christianity as the spiritual centre of the "Christian" nations. The reaction against an empty individualism leads to a demonic collectivism.

#### IV POINTS OF CONTACT FOR EVANGELIZATION IN THE LIFE OF WESTERN SOCIETY

The general point of contact for evangelical apologetics is the (conscious and unconscious) quest for a new spiritual centre on the part of Western society. Christian evangelism in its application to the needs of man in our disintegrated Western world must show that Christianity is able to furnish a transcendent and unconditional centre, and at the same time to balance the

concrete, divergent elements which enter into our present social, political and spiritual existence. The Christian churches can seek to demonstrate these things, first, by their very existence, second, by their evangelistic witness, and third, by their apologetic power. In order to succeed, Christian faith must liberate itself from those distortions which have made it participate in the disintegration of the Christian nations. This in turn involves two things. First, Christian faith must conquer in itself the principles of immanence and of empty individualism. Second, Christian faith must not again become authoritarian (heteronomous) in an oppressive and arbitrary way.

The disintegration of society within the Christian nations closes one way and opens another for Christianity. It closes the traditional way of the Christian churches and it opens a new way which is not yet fully visible but whose direction can already be discerned.

The first requisite action is one of dissociating the Christian order from disintegrated Western society. No "religion" that is merely part of the process of disintegration can become a healing power; only something which transcends the process can give it a new spiritual centre. The Christian order can dissociate itself only through the power of that Foundation which is at the same time its Judge: The New Being, manifest in Jesus as the Christ. The prophetic note (not the theological system) offered by Barth and his friends must be understood in terms of a movement to dissociate the Christian order from the Christian nations and their disintegrating culture. Barth points to the absolute transcendence of the absolute, the unconditional character of the unconditioned, the divinity of the divine. These seeming tautologies are the theme of every prophetic message, of every dissociation of the healing power from what it is supposed to heal.

If this dissociation is carried through, the possibility of a new spiritual centre appears; the principle of immanence is broken, and with it the vicious dilemma between an automatic and a tyrannical organization of social life. The transcendence of the spiritual principle guarantees that it is not identical with any conditioned, finite centre. On the other hand, however, it does not simply abandon human life to its automatic, compulsive and self-destructive patterns. The voice calling for dissociation—in Jewish prophetism, in the New Testament, in the Reforma-



tion, in Neo-orthodoxy—never sanctions the establishment of a new idolatry; but men, of course, quickly misunderstand it and identify the new spiritual centre with an absolute nation, an absolute Church, an absolute creed or an absolute theology. Whenever this misunderstanding occurs, the dissociation merely leads to another, often a more tyrannical, attempt to claim that some conditional form of life is unconditional.

Dissociation of the Christian message from disintegrating Western society requires a true conception of the relationship between transcendence and immanence. The orthodox supernaturalistic version of this relationship is disastrous; it regards the transcendent as a second objective "realm" of miraculous events, and heavenly individuals (including God) beyond the natural, historical world. So long as the issue is conceived in such a manner, naturalism is always right in refusing to acknowledge this transcendent realm. The creative ground, the judging power and the fulfilling meaning of all finite centres and events is not a second "realm" of reality; it is the source, structure and ultimate meaning of the *one* world in which finite centres and events are found. It has been and always should be the intention of the Christian Church to point to this ultimate ground of life and experience, and thus to lead every generation to *the* spiritual centre of its own existence. The Christian Church should perform this task for "the Christian nations" of the present age.

Hence the true dissociation of the Christian order from the disintegrating Western world includes a true association with Western culture and with every other part of our world. Supernaturalism, because it is incapable of a true dissociation of the unconditional from the conditional, is also incapable of a true association of them. It seeks to control and suppress from outside the finite centres of meaning and being, instead of permeating and affirming from within. Yet association and dissociation are interdependent in a precise way, and each must be complete. It was the glory of the Jewish prophets that they reached completeness in both respects; by distinguishing the righteousness of God from all finite human aims, they pointed to the restoration of a right relationship between the two. Similarly to-day the Church, by differentiating its message from the shattered assumptions and illusions of Western culture, must *be* the spiritual centre for a re-integration of human life. It

must become a spiritual centre for healing the neurotic mind of the individual and the split consciousness of the masses. It must become a spiritual centre for children in relation to their parents, and for parents in relation to each other and to their children. It must become a spiritual centre for the relation of man to nature and to the machine, to money and to the competitor. It must become a spiritual centre for the self-accusing scientist, and for the educator whose task has become empty because he (and his culture) has no stable scale of values to offer a younger generation. If the Christian faith, through the Church, is unable to furnish a new, all-embracing, non-tyrannical spiritual centre, then it has nothing serious to say to our time; and it will perish in the West as one finite centre of life and meaning in the vast disintegration of the Western world. Christianity is either healing power from the ground of human existence, or it is one contributing factor, among others, to the personal and social sickness of our period, and will perish with it.

The problem discussed in this article thus leads inevitably to the fundamental question about Christianity's healing power. In so far as Christianity is merely one cultural phenomenon among others, it is enmeshed in the forces that are destroying Western society. It can resist disintegration only by furnishing a spiritual centre which transcends the patterns of Western culture; and it can furnish the basis for a new integration of life only by replacing the principles of immanence with a principle which reunites all finite concerns—political, communal and personal—with their ultimate ground. Of course, it is not possible to assert that Western society can be saved. Still less is it possible to assert that God's plan for the world depends upon its salvation and that of the Western churches which have been associated with it. This paper is written from the conviction that Western civilization has in the past incorporated great spiritual values, that it is worth saving if it can be saved, and that the only means by which it can be saved is the recovery of the Gospel of Christ as the power which can heal the sickness of society from within, from the ground of its own being. Even if all this were destroyed, the Gospel would still be the Gospel, and God's purpose would go forward through other men and in other ways.



## THE CHURCH'S FAILURE TO BE CHRISTIAN: I

*by Frank Bennett*

IT has become fashionable to describe this present age in the West as post-Christian. It would be more accurate, though cumbersome, to call it post-Constantinian. For to speak of the state of affairs that history has lately been leaving behind as Christian is, to say the least of it, question-begging. There has been falling to pieces the particular relation between the Church and Society in general which the conversion of the Roman Emperor brought about. That such an approximation between them is unknown to the New Testament does not condemn it, for the providence of God did not cease to act at the end of the first century. But it means that mimetic recognition of Christianity by the public and the now diminishing ethical assets which have followed from it cannot be regarded as fundamental by the New Israel. Thus the indiscriminating use of the term, post-Christian, covers up what has been happening under a generalization. It evades the whole question of Constantine.

Constantine has been acclaimed as a triumph and deplored as a disaster. What is certain is that his conversion meant a revolution. To Tertullian the very idea of a Christian emperor had seemed grotesque; the Christian was an outsider and he gloried in it. There were also many who in the event were driven into the segregated strictness of the Egyptian desert by the effects upon the Church of imperial favour and in various forms their protest has continued. Yet it is difficult to see what else the Church could have done. It could not write above its portals, "Emperors not admitted". One must believe that God was calling His Church to this risk, that it was He Who brought it to this point and made this demand, for the course of history is in His hands. But risk there undoubtedly was. "Lead us not into temptation" might well have been the most fervent prayer. In point of fact the Church succumbed in due course to every temptation.

But now, with Constantine in reverse, the voice of God would seem to be calling us through new circumstances to a reorienta-

tion—to rediscovery—and it is the Church itself that we are being called upon to rediscover. Certainly there can be no antiquarian reconstruction of the primitive—no return to what was—though the latter days may find much that is significant in the first. But history is not a slate that can be wiped clean, nor in any case may the Church write off the responsibility placed upon it through Constantine and still more in the Dark Ages. A new relation will be very far from meaning that the Church can wash its hands of society. On the contrary, it must steadfastly set itself to do for an again disintegrating world all which that world will allow it to do without encouraging delusions. Nor may Christians disparage the State. Rather they must seek to confer upon it a sense of its God-given status and responsibility. But it will be of the first importance to observe the drastic nature of the change which has taken place in the relation of the whole Church to the Western environment. Far more is involved than any mere question of state-connection. Churches which have never had that advantage or disadvantage, whichever it may be, now find themselves none the less profoundly affected by the new attitude of the society within which they exist. The first need will be to clear away what has become *débris*, and much of it is fit subject for repentance.

We can thank God among the ruins and accept for our purging the chastisement of the awkward situation in which the disappearance of ill-founded success has placed us. But our temptation is to content ourselves with the last relics of it and, most of all, to preserve the state of mind which it induced. We have been a power in the land. We have wielded a power very different from that which Christ promised to His Church. Not that the Church can fail to reckon with power; idealistically to suppose that power does not count is to live in a dream world. The Church may often be required to manipulate power in the interests of the moral law, but the Church must beware of power. Actually it has grasped it with both hands, and this has been true of almost every part of the Church, for the immaculate have with a few notable exceptions lacked opportunity rather than desire.

Stretched out over centuries of church history is the secular arm. Very considerably by means of it an immense and imposing structure was built up. But it was not fitting that the sword and the threat of the sword should be employed for build-



ing on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets with surely a tortured Christ, given into His people's hands, as head corner-stone—and now we are paying the price. For the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. We are solid with the continuing Church in its sins as well as in its graces, and the least Erastian churches have not always been loath to eat of the forbidden fruit. But the Church did not merely use the world; it sank neck-deep into the world, and that, not to seek and to save, but to manage. Here again it is difficult to see what else it could have done in the initial stages of the process. Almost overnight the Church found the world on its hands. How in the crisis of imperial disintegration could bishops have refused the magistracy which charity itself thrust upon them? Yet aberration threatened. Pastors would be swallowed up in prelates after the manner of Byzantium and the proper tension between Church and State assume unbecoming feudal forms. Already Avignon with its hard-headed bureaucracy loomed on the horizon. When and where the "godly prince" ousted the Pope, there was no real change of heart, but by that time the decline of ecclesiastical greatness, which has become so steep of late, had already set in. Then one might have expected that God's Church would with a sigh of relief have loosed its hold on earthly governance which once it had been compelled to undertake. Not so! By now it had acquired a fatal inheritance—a position to keep up. For management had led to self-aggrandizement and, not least among dissidents, to a flair for intrigue, so that still what is apt to seem most important is that the Church, or some part of the Church, should be advantaged.

Now certainly the Church cannot live outside the world, for God has put it into the world. It was inevitable and, up to a point, most proper that it should reflect the culture and civilization in which at any given time it found itself. To-day it reflects only too accurately the absence of a culture. But it became not only in the world but of the world and, if some of this story is ancient history, it is this ancient history which, deflected by God, has placed the Church in its present predicament. It is the aftermath of this history which provides present temptations. Blatant power may have fallen from the hands of the Church, but Satan becomes only the more cunning. Still we manoeuvre where we can no longer control; we set up secretariats; we prefer organization to faith. Most of all, we remain obsessed with our

heritage of apparatus. The basilicas of Old and New Rome set a fashion which has bequeathed buildings many and some of them great. The favour of kings and lords and early capitalists peopled Europe with a numerous clergy. Thus the Church now finds itself like some indigent nobleman who must make a show of preserving the family mansion and retainers, lest he should seem to have become less noble. This becomes his life work; it absorbs him. So the Church is under temptation to be absorbed in maintaining itself and to compromise the Gospel in order to entice those who will have none of the Gospel but who have the money. Not the preaching of Christ crucified is presented as the objective, but something entitled "spiritual reconstruction", "spiritual values" or whatever it may be. Once it was pardons and faked relics; now it is "spiritual values". The pardons and relics sold better than the "spiritual values", but both have proved useful to a Church feverishly striving to keep up its former position in a changed world. For in such circumstances the Church has to choose between a measure of prosperity and the life which can only come by death and resurrection. The latter is the choice of faith. Israel must come out of Egypt.

Now indeed the process of coming out must be most painful. One loses caste; one invites a taunt song; one is despised. They may be happy who find this done for them by a revolution. Shearing by a Gestapo is attended by physical suffering, but psychologically the severest test may be a lingering decline. It is notable that the confessing churches have succeeded in interpreting their distresses dynamically, theologically. The voice of God has been heard speaking in the fire. Not that those areas of the Church which have undergone persecution have been brought to perfection. The unpersecuted have expected too much of the persecuted, and have been surprised to find them, not perfect, but exhausted. But the persecuted have also been apt to expect of those who have remained in comparative ease that which they of all people were the least likely to possess. They have expected them to retain and redistribute an *élan* which has everywhere been lost, but most of all among those to whom the same struggle has presented itself in an utterly undramatic form. These last are the most subject to illusion and its attendant depression. On the one hand, they are able to go on expecting that what is being irrevocably, but in their case gradually, shattered will be restored. They do not recognize



the Shatterer. On the other hand, repeatedly and increasingly disappointed expectations sink them deeper in the trough. Called, smitten in mercy, pointed to salvation, they still look for a conjuring trick or seek to devise one. Thus those churches are already a stage ahead which have been humbled to the uttermost, though for them too it is still possible to resist God's will. In the churches as yet least touched, and that by decline rather than by cataclysm, it is often the struggling congregation, not the still apparently prosperous one, that is in the vanguard. It begins to take to itself the insights of adversity.

This is not to say that we should turn iconoclast; it is not a case of wildly abandoning everything. Faithful work has been done and has maintained a body of the faithful bearing the marks of apostolic heredity. There is a Church which lives—sometimes in spite of the Church—and it is not invisible. The first step is always humbly and thankfully to accept that which God presents, not *de novo*, but out of the past. He presents companies of sinners with whom their fellow-sinners must seek incorporation. But to accept will be something very different from complacency. There is that which has to be sought, which has to be recovered after centuries of identification with Mesech and Kedar, and it is elusive. It cannot be defined, but will emerge from common life in the Spirit. Thus both the arrogance of the revolutionary and the sleep of the traditionalist are to be avoided. The new is new and yet it must take shape hidden in the infected womb of the old.

There are quiet stirrings, there are patient experiments among humble Christians up and down the world, which will be bearing fruit when the heralded movements have been forgotten. There the new comes to birth where the Body of Christ is being built up, for there a People comes into being and not a mere machinery. The tragedy is that so much of the thought and energy of the Church goes into undertakings which, because they are unrelated to the humble places where the life is lived, result in little but a piling up of more dry bones. To tell the truth, there is much unconscious despising of the little ones. They are left outside the councils where theologizers make so bold as to discuss them. This is ominous, since again in this the Church follows the trend of the world. Yet they think of things among the sycamore trees of Tekoa which are hidden from the wise and prudent.

What is most necessary now is that the Gospel, disentangled from a perfectionist confusion of Gospel with the Sermon on the Mount, be again lived in the thoughts and ways of the local churches. For there its content and application were originally worked out, not in the schools, but in the emergencies of day-to-day church life. The most glowing doctrinal passages of Scripture have to us a surprisingly occasionalist background. The meaning of redemption was discovered even in the squabbles. But we have let the Gospel become irrelevant to the life of the Church. For now the hopes of the Church are apt to be quite other than the hopes of heavenly citizens who "look for the resurrection of the dead". Often they are little more than the fashionable hopes of the moment put into ecclesiastical dress. Again, we pray for "The fellowship of the Holy Ghost" and rely on mere camaraderie. We preach justification by faith and ourselves justify by works giving and desiring continual human commendation in our churches. True, this is for the most part in the little things, yet it is exactly in the little things that the whole thing is either Christian or sub-Christian. Where else? It is exactly in the small event, the casual word, the detail of administration, that the Gospel is or is not proclaimed.

Scripture must permeate and govern the everyday life of the Church. Here there is need for much thinking but also for patience. The rediscovered Bible has as yet scarcely penetrated beyond a narrow circle, nor need this surprise. Hardly have pastors and teachers digested what has to be relearnt; still less have they found a medium for reconveying it. But this medium will be discovered, not in conferences, but in the persevering converse of the pastor with his people. There has come to be an un-Christian haste about the Church, a haste which is something very different from a sense of urgency. God does not ask us to be alarmed for Him, but then it is for our position in the world that we are alarmed, for we are more than half persuaded that His honour is bound up with its maintenance. Constantine's legacy remains the Kingdom of God to us, while we preach that it is not. It is not even the Church.

It is a Tower of Babel—progress run to pride—and Nemesis overtakes it. The Church erects its Towers of Babel too—invariably, for the Church is involved in fallen terrestrial existence. But the Church should by faith be able to forsake them and move on. With the Bible in its hands it should be in a



position to interpret, to accept, to use that which the hand of God does to it. Have we perhaps been more forward in interpreting the distresses of secular society than those of the Church? Have we proclaimed the end of the Renaissance age in the history of Europe, and failed to observe the end of the Constantinian phase in the history of the Church? But now it is "Farewell, Byzantium". God strips His Church of the spoils of its former victory that it may be driven back on Him. He undermines its security that it may learn to live by faith. He baffles it that it may be brought to see that all things are possible with Him. Most of all, He removes occasions of glorying other than "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".

For it is only faith that is going to move mountains. Such faith must find expression in the quality and action of corporate life—"Ye are our epistle". And this corporate life will only be "fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel", when it is grounded in an apprehension of the Gospel and is in Him Who is the Gospel. The Christian hope of salvation, resurrection, attainment, by incorporation in and through Christ, must be recovered, for apart from that there is no good reason for expecting anything to happen—at any rate through us. As to that most excellent gift of *agape*, this will be the fruit, not of exhortation, but of a Church which reaches out hands to Pentecost.

It is then time for "finis" to be written to discussion and for each man to sink himself in the dedicated life of some part of the royal priesthood whose totality is Christ. For here is the key to the future—maybe a distant future to be patiently looked for but the only future that is going to count. At present the Church in its hurry speaks not only to a vacuum, but from something very like a vacuum. The Word makes no impression because the Church behind the Word makes no impression. When the world declares that the Church is not Christian it means for the most part that the Church is not perfect. It disparages earthen vessels. But the world points its finger at the inexcusable when it notes that the Church is so largely indistinguishable from the world. It is of the world alike in calibre and outlook, and in part this is because it has been absorbed where it should be holding aloof. Certainly we need continually to be reminded that it is for the world that Christ has died and risen again. We need to regain the vision of the consummation set forth in the first chapter of Ephesians. Yet the Church has also to stand

over against the world, and that, for the sake of the world. For what the world most needs of the Church is neither diagnosis nor advice, but the word of God prophetically spoken, and for that the Church must learn to live again by faith.

THE CHURCH'S FAILURE TO BE CHRISTIAN: II

by S. C. Neill

IT is easy to criticize the Church and to point out its failures. But we have a right to ask the critics to state what it is that in their estimation the Church has failed to be. Very often we shall find that the Church is being judged by some purely human standard, that the critic is objecting because it has failed to be or to do something which it never set out to be or to do, and that he has failed to take note either of what the Church is divinely intended to be, or of the supreme difficulty of the task which has been set before it by its Creator. The Church is to be the body of Christ. The principle of its life is that of the incarnation. It is to manifest the life of God among men. Each of these elements, *the life of God* and *among men* has to be emphasized; if the Church is to be faithful to its vocation *as Church*, each has to be maintained in its due proportion. If the manward side is overstressed, the Church is in peril of becoming so closely identified with human projects and ideas as to lose its capacity to be what God intends it to be, the critic and the judge of all human purposes that develop themselves in independence of God. If the Godward side receives a one-sided and exclusive attention, the Church tends to lose its power to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. To maintain the exact proportion is to walk on an extremely narrow path. The sinlessness of Christ is manifest exactly here, in His inerrant judgment of the path that He is to follow, so as to be at the same time wholly at the disposal of the Father Who sent Him, and also to be wholly at the disposal of men so as to be their Saviour, without allowing either aspect of His work to encroach on the other, or, through conflict between them, to introduce an



element of uncertainty into the directness and decision of His activity. It is the maintenance of this tension that constitutes the inevitability of the Cross. To enter into the life of men with the promise of salvation arouses the expectation that salvation will be given in terms of their all too human hopes and desires; the absolute refusal of these hopes and desires demanded by loyalty to the divine purpose cannot but call out the enmity of those who feel that they have been cheated out of the very thing that they have been led to count on, and so leads them to destroy that in which they had begun to trust. From the point of view of the world, the Church is always in the ambiguous position of the Christ; it seems both to promise and then to deny the very thing which it had promised; in the life of the Church, therefore, as in the life of the Christ, the Cross is an inevitable element. But this Cross is inevitable only if the Church, like the Christ, maintains the fulness of its vocation, both in absolute loyalty to God and in absolute serviceableness to men.

The essential failure of the Church will be found in its failure to do justice to both terms of its vocation. On the one hand, the Church may so withdraw itself as to be no longer deeply concerned in the affairs of the world, and may purchase peace at the price of loss of effectiveness. The great monastic movements were in their day a necessary protest against the tendency of the Church to become so much involved in the world as to lose its sense of distinctness and divine vocation. The monasteries did render incalculable service to the Christian cause by the preservation of much in the heritage of the ancient world that would otherwise have perished, by their missionary enterprise and the civilizing work that they were able to do among peoples newly Christianized, and by their unfailing witness to the primacy of prayer and worship in the Christian life. Their weakness lay in a withdrawal from the world such as our Lord Himself never practised, and in the belief that the world, as the Kingdom of Satan, is utterly irredeemable, so that a man's only hope of salvation is to come out of it entirely, abandoning it to the destruction which is its destiny, and in which a man, if he remains in it, cannot but become involved. When the opponent of the Church criticizes it on the ground of its other-worldliness, this criticism may be misplaced; but also it may have in it an element of truth, since genuine Christian other-worldliness con-

sists not in the abandonment of the world to the powers of darkness, but in the ceaseless demand that the Kingdom of God should come here on earth, and the recognition that salvation can come not from within the world, but only by the descent upon it of the divine as it was manifest in Jesus of Nazareth.

In other times and circumstances, the Church has taken the path of identification with the world. This has been a perilous path, but one which could not have been refused. The Church has the power, divinely implanted, to be the fashioner of the life of nations. Only those who have lived long in a country which has never been Christian can appreciate the extent to which the Church was successful in imposing on Christendom the Christian pattern of living, and how even in lands where secularization has gone furthest, the mind of a Western man still moves within the Christian categories and the Christian framework of thought. It is impossible to regret the immense labour of education undertaken by the Church in the past and to some extent still undertaken in the present, or to regard as wholly misconceived its involvement in plans for social reform. Yet the partial Christianization of the secular world had its Nemesis in the partial secularization of the Church. When we have allowed for a certain bitterness and unreasonableness in the critics, we may yet find much to learn from them, since the basis of their criticism may be a dim and perhaps not more than half-conscious recognition that the claim of the Church to be a divine society is not valid, unless it is recognizably a society different in kind and in operation from the secular societies which it is its task to educate and to judge.

The achievement of Jesus was the creation on earth of a new kind of life, a life in which the fellowship with God made possible through redemption cannot but become articulate in a new fellowship among believers different from that of any other society. The Church is the place in which the Word of God is proclaimed continuously both in judgment and in mercy. It is the place in which the believer learns to translate the principles of divine revelation into applications to the ordinary concerns of daily life. It is the sphere in which he is assured continuously of the reality of the forgiveness of God. It is the fellowship in which, if it is true to its nature, the intractable problems of personal relationships, of money, of work, of leisure, of race, are solved, both as a rebuke to the world which has failed to solve



them and as an example which the world can in a measure follow. It is in the Church that man learns to apply to all the affairs of time the judgments of eternity, and so to live in that perspective in which alone it is possible for him to be aware of his true greatness without falling into the sin of Adam and desiring to assert his independence as against God. The world is vaguely aware of its need of such a society. The deep root of the neurosis so widespread in all the countries of the West is man's uncertainty of being loved, and the failure of ordinary love to penetrate to that deepest level where men really live and where, if they are starved of love, they can have neither security nor peace. In a society in which the love of God is constantly mediated by the unfailing and assured love of the brethren, man can find himself at home and at peace: there is no other place of healing for his sickness.

If we consider the serious criticisms of the Church, those, that is, which are made from other motives than jealousy or pique, we shall find that many of them resolve themselves into the objection that the Church just is not what it claims to be, and lacks those qualities without which it cannot be the body of Christ.

Most educated men in the world to-day have some knowledge of the Gospels, and some mental picture of the character of Jesus. They realize, perhaps better than many professing Christians, that the only true criterion of Christianity is likeness to Christ. The heart of their complaint, though perhaps they would be hard put to it to frame it in words, is that they do not see in Christians and in the Church that likeness to Christ which they have a right to expect. Real holiness is impressive and attractive; if the Church has failed to hold the respect of the ordinary man, may the cause not be, in part at least, that the children of the Church have failed to set before the world the challenge of unmistakable holiness after the manner of Christ?

One criticism is made not infrequently by the convert from a non-Christian religion. In many parts of the world the convert has to abandon the whole of the life and tradition in which he has grown up, and must depend only on the fellowship of believers for all that is represented by family and community. Even where the break is not as complete as this, the convert has jettisoned all the thought-forms by which previously his life has been determined, and has made the adventure of embark-

ing on the unknown sea of the Christian life. Far more than any "convert" in a quasi-Christian country, he is in need of trust, affection and guidance from those among whom he is now to find his home. Again and again the complaint is heard that the Church is not a welcoming body, and that the atmosphere into which the newcomer enters is cold and suspicious. It must be recognized that the convert in a non-Christian country is an unknown quantity. His conversion may have been quite genuine; yet in the field of Christian experience he is a child; on a great many subjects he is uninformed and unaware of the Christian way of doing things. He makes many mistakes, and sometimes offends his Christian friends by his erratic ways. There is always the possibility that he may fall away and return to his non-Christian faith. This is a point which is not often mentioned in missionary magazines and books, but it is one which has to be taken seriously. The most difficult point of all is that of marriage; the stability of a young convert depends as much as anything on his finding a true Christian partner, with whom he can begin to build up as he desires a genuinely Christian home. But parents are naturally suspicious, and are more likely to desire for their daughters a safe marriage with an established Christian than the uncertain adventure of a partnership with a convert. The anxiety is natural; yet how can the new convert grow unless he is taken at once into a fellowship of real trust and confidence? Even in Western lands, those who have come out of a non-Christian environment have been known to complain that they have missed in the Church the warm fellowship which they had previously found in the public-house or the athletic team.

Another objection which, it has to be admitted, does lie against the Church as it is, is that secular motives enter far more into its life than is right. Within the fellowship of love, there should be no place for ambition, rivalry or intrigue. But it is obvious—more perhaps to the outsider than to the member of the Church, who may have become all too used to things as they are—that these evils do enter in. They began very early to corrupt the Christian society; in the fourth century, at the election of Pope Damasus, the Church where his followers had met in armed conflict with those of his rival Ursinus was strewn with the bodies of the slain. In modern times, party passion within the Church does not perhaps go to such extremes; but it may still



happen that elections to offices in the Church are accompanied by the same kind of lobbying, canvassing and intrigue as are manifest in the operations of secular politics. The worth of a minister is sometimes assessed in terms more appropriate to a skilful company promoter than to a follower of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Church only too readily takes the colour of the world, whose god is success.

A third criticism is that the Church, so far from transcending class and social distinctions, has in fact stereotyped them. There are not many churches in which it is possible for Christians of all social strata and levels of education to feel at home together and to worship as one fellowship. This difficulty is far less felt in Roman Catholic and Orthodox than in Protestant countries. Even there the difficulty cannot wholly be avoided; a French Roman Catholic writer has recently pointed out that the atmosphere of the ordinary Parisian church is bourgeois, and that it is almost impossible for the proletarian, used to an entirely different kind of life and environment, to recognize it as his spiritual home. The greater difficulty felt in Protestant countries seems to be closely associated with the character of Protestant worship and its special emphasis on the sermon. Intellect divides; on the emotional and intuitive level men are much more nearly akin. The sermon is aimed at minds of different calibre. The Eucharist is a service of levelling; there may be immense differences in spiritual apprehension, but at the climax of the service, rich and poor, educated and unlearned, all do the same thing. Except in unusual circumstances the sermon has but rarely the same universal appeal. Any minister who has been faced with the task of preaching to a mixed congregation, such as is still to be found in villages where the tradition of church-going has not been lost, is familiar with the problem of knowing what to say to the congregation. What will appeal to the better-educated will be unintelligible to the ploughboy; what will go home to the heart of the ploughboy will be tedious to the instructed Christian. Part of the problem of proclamation is the adaptation of the Gospel to the hearer; even to his vocabulary. The result is seen in the stratification of churches in cities. Even where there are not such special difficulties as lead to the separation of white and Negro congregations in the United States and South Africa, there is a tendency for congregations to follow social groupings, for the richer and

poorer to worship in separation from one another, and so for the concept of the Christian family to be obscured by the fortuitous operation of social and economic factors.

A radical challenge to the Church comes from the working class. Where does the Church stand in relation to the working-class movement of the last century? It claims to be the champion of the oppressed and disinherited. Even the most conservative of Christians must admit that a century ago the working classes in all European countries were oppressed and disinherited; few would be likely to deny that the working-class movement has been, at least in a measure, a claim for justice and liberty such as are declared in the Gospel to be the birthright of every man made in the image of God. This is not to deny that the movements of the left, like all other human enterprises, have been tainted with selfishness, unfairness to others and corruption. But have the churches ever had the courage to say openly and unitedly that they stand for the principles of justice, that they can be relied on to support any movement which tends to improve the lot of men, and that they are unequivocally against privilege divorced from responsibility? Much more has been done by Christians than the critics of the Church may recognize. It has also to be borne in mind that social and political progress can never be the primary concern of the Church. Yet when all this has been allowed for, it is still true that for the alienation of the working classes from the Church, the Church itself must bear some measure of blame. There is an inevitable tendency for the Church to become bourgeois; the virtues of honesty, diligence and thrift which ought to be practised by all Christians raise men in the social and economic scale; those who have themselves most hardly won security are not always the most ready to share it with others; it is all too easy to identify the Church with the *status quo*, to believe that its prosperity depends on the maintenance of things as they are, and so to be suspicious of any movement for extensive changes.<sup>1</sup> This attitude, so common as to be almost normal among Christians of the West, is a denial of the true nature of the Church. In every age, oppression and wrong reconstitute themselves, and there is no Utopia this side of the coming of the Kingdom of God with Power. The Church

<sup>1</sup> In 1879, when the first organized strike took place in Sweden, the strikers wished to have morning prayers, and invited a clergyman to take these for them. The clergyman not merely refused, but notified the police, who called out the military to compel the strikers to come back to work.



is pledged, by its loyalty to Jesus Christ, to fight every form of oppression and wrong. Unless it is a revolutionary Church, it is not a Church at all. This does not mean that the Church is bound to be revolutionary on terms fixed by the makers of a contemporary revolution. Far from it; the Church must stand aloof and retain its freedom to proclaim the Word of God in judgment and condemnation on reactionaries and revolutionaries alike. The deification of the proletariat in the Marxian system is a mythical, mystical and irrational element with which the hard-headed common sense of Christianity can make no terms. But independence must not turn into indifference; that wrong is not all on one side must not be taken as an excuse for silence when the situation demands plain speaking. On the whole, it has to be admitted that the churches have been marked by timidity rather than by courage; they have been more ready to appease the aggressor than to risk their own position and possessions by any bold challenge.

The recognition of failure is the first step towards success. If the Church has failed to be Christian, its failure cannot be due to any adverse circumstances or difficulties consequent on its passage through time. It can only have come through failure on the part of the Church to understand its own vocation as the body of Christ. What the vocation is was plainly indicated by St. Paul in his exposition of the meaning of the Eucharist; as the many grains are gathered into one loaf, so the many members of the Church by drawing near to God are made into one bread, one body. But the grain is gathered into one only in order that the loaf may be broken and given for the life of men. The life of the Church is not for itself. In that life there must always be these three elements: constant drawing near to God through Christ, the experienced fellowship of love through the presence of Christ in His body, the self-giving of the Church for the life of the world, after the example of Him who came that men might have life and might have it abundantly.

# III

## SOME AXIOMS OF THE MODERN MAN

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### PREFACE

*The section which follows is obviously different in character from the rest of the volume.*

*At one of the preliminary meetings, Professor Emil Brunner of Zurich pointed out that man's thinking is to a considerable extent determined by inner convictions not consciously thought out or clearly expressed, taking the form of Axioms of contemporary proverbial wisdom, and that part of the difficulty in evangelism to-day arises from the contradictions between most men's Axioms and the general structure of biblical thought and ideas.*

*Professor Brunner was asked to formulate a brief statement of some typical Axioms of the modern man; and his list of Axioms is here printed, though he himself would not wish it to be regarded as final or exhaustive. A suggestive paper by Mr. C. S. Lewis of Oxford on this same subject had previously been circulated, and groups in various countries prepared lists of Axioms, a selection from which is here printed.*

*The compilers of this volume well understand that no Axioms can be fully representative; but it is believed that this method of study can be very profitable, and that others may find it a useful exercise to draw up similar lists of Axioms representing the mind of those groups with which they are most closely in touch.*



# 1

## AXIOMS

*by Emil Brunner*

1. Everything is relative.
2. What can't be proved can't be believed.
3. Scientific knowledge is certain and the standard of truth; matters of faith are uncertain.
4. Beyond death nobody knows.
5. "Real" means seen and handled.
6. The big things are the great things. Because man is so small in this big universe he is so little.
7. I cannot help being what I am.
8. Freedom means doing as I like.
9. Justice means equality.
10. To put religion first is religious arrogance.
11. Laws of nature determine everything.

# 2

## AXIOMS FROM GREAT BRITAIN

1. There may be a God—but what does it matter?
2. Man needs education—not redemption.
3. A sense of sin cramps your style.
4. Christianity's all right—if it worked.
5. It's only human nature after all.
6. Science displaces dogma.
7. At all costs keep an open mind.
8. I just couldn't care less.
9. There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.
10. What I believe matters little—it's what I do.
11. "Just the art of being kind  
Is all this sad world needs."

## AXIOMS FROM AMERICA

1. Truth is established only by proof, and ultimate truth is unknowable.
2. Look out for number one. If you don't, nobody else will.
3. Human nature is fundamentally sound, but needs guidance and correction to achieve its fulfilment. "Sin" is just another name for ignorance or correctible imperfection, or biological lag.
4. There is progress in history, but society may yet destroy itself if the discoveries of science are not controlled.
5. There always have been wars and there always will be. You can't change human nature.
6. "God" is really a projection of man's ideals.
7. A man's religion is his own business and every man has a right to his own belief.
8. Other-worldliness is dangerous because it distracts attention from the effort to gain freedom, security, and justice in this life; and anyway we know nothing about what happens after death.
9. Jesus was a good man. What we need are a lot more people like Him. Now, take Lincoln . . .
10. Do a good turn when you can—but don't be a sucker.

## AXIOMS FROM GERMANY

1. Komme mir keiner mit grossen Ideen! Es ist ja doch alles Betrug—oder bestenfalls Selbstbetrug, vor allem in der Politik! Traue niemandem!
2. Ich glaube nicht, dass es noch irgendetwas Dauerhaftes gibt. Und mit dem Tod ist sowieso alles aus.
3. Es hat keinen Sinn, sich für grosse Dinge einzusetzen, denn jeder Einsatz bleibt vergebens, und man selbst ist nur der Dumme dabei (überhaupt: wenn ich das Wort "Einsatz" höre, wird mir schon schlecht).
4. Bestimmte Leute tragen die Verantwortung für unser Schicksal; sie sind offenbar gewissenlos und erfüllen ihre Aufgabe schlecht; aber ich kann das nicht ändern.



5. Wieso soll ich schuld sein an dem Unglück der Menschheit? Mag man die Schuldigen suchen und bestrafen—ich möchte endlich meine Ruhe haben.
6. Wir haben es so lange schlecht gehabt, nun sollen es "die andern" (Herr x und Herr y, meine Nachbarn) auch mal zu spüren bekommen (das Axiom des Denunzianten).
7. Wenn man satt ist, kann man wohl Pläne für die Zukunft schmieden oder von Moral und Religion reden—wenn man hungrig ist, fällt das alles aus. Das gilt für die Einzelnen wie für die Völker.
8. Niemand hilft mir—warum soll ich andern helfen? Mehr als man mir bietet gebe ich nicht her.
9. Vielleicht wird es doch eines Tages wieder besser werden—aber wann? Es kommt darauf an, dass man sich so lange eben noch über Wasser hält.
10. Es scheint, dass Gott im Leben gewisser Leute eine Rolle spielt. Leider bin ich selbst über dies Stadium hinaus.
11. Wenn es einen Gott gäbe, dann . . .
12. Ich will von Vereinen und Organisationen und somit auch von der Kirche nichts mehr wissen, sondern will mein eigenes Leben leben. Eine Beitrittserklärung unterschreibe ich nirgends mehr.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

1. Don't talk to me about your wonderful ideas! They are all lies. Or at least you are self-deceived, especially in politics. Don't trust anyone!
2. I don't believe anything stable exists. And when you're dead everything is finished, anyhow.
3. There is no sense in bothering about great causes, for every attempt to support such things is utterly useless, and you are just left holding the baby!
4. Certain people bear the responsibility for our destiny: it's obvious that they have no conscience at all and that they do it badly. But *I* can't alter that.
5. How can *I* be guilty of the misery of humanity? Find the guilty and punish *them*! But *I* want a little peace.
6. We've had such a bad time for so long, it's time that someone else had a taste of it! (Mr. A and Mrs. B for instance.) (This is the type of person who "informs" against his neighbours.)
7. When you've had enough to eat, it's all very fine to talk about morals and religion, but if you are hungry nothing else matters. This applies to individuals as well as to nations.
8. Nobody helps *me*—why should *I* help other people? I'm not going to give people more than they give me.
9. Perhaps one day things will get better—but when? Everything depends on keeping one's head above water.
10. It seems as though God plays a part in the lives of certain people. Unfortunately *I* myself have got beyond this stage!
11. If there's a God, then . . .
12. I don't want to join any more societies or organizations, but I want to live my own life. I'll never sign any more membership forms.

## AXIOMS FROM FRANCE

Prouvez-moi Dieu, j'y croirai.

Tout est relatif.

Toutes les religions sont bonnes pourvu qu'on les pratique.

Je n'ai pas besoin de religion pour faire le bien.

Les chrétiens ne valent pas mieux que les autres.

Si c'est Dieu qui donne la croyance, qu'il commence. Ce n'est pas ma faute si je ne crois pas.

La religion, c'est pour les riches. Ils ont le temps de s'en occuper.

Dieu pardonnera, c'est son métier (Voltaire).

Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait au Bon Dieu pour être si malheureux?

Si Dieu existe, je ne le félicite pas.

Il n'y a pas de Bon Dieu.

Je ne crois que ce que je vois.

Quand on est mort, on est bien mort!

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Prove to me that God exists, and I'll believe in Him.

Everything is relative.

Every religion is good, provided you really believe in it.

I don't need to be religious to do good!

Christians are no better than anyone else.

If it is God Who gives us faith, let Him get on with it! It isn't *my* fault if I don't believe!

Religion is for the rich! *They* have time to bother with it!

God will forgive; that's what He's there for (Voltaire).

What have *I* done to deserve this?

If God exists, I don't think much of Him!

*I've* no use for God!

I only believe what I can actually see.

If you are dead, then you *are* dead!



# IV

## THE GOSPEL IN ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT TIME

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### PREFACE

*The Faith of the Church does not vary with the changing climates of human thought, but the Gospel as preached, if it is to find its way to the hearts of men, must be adapted to their capacity for understanding. In this section, we have tried to show both aspects of this paradox.*

*The Confession of Faith here printed was drawn up at the Tambaram (Madras) Meeting of the I.M.C. in 1938, by a group drawn from many countries and churches, and was adopted by the whole Assembly. It is a reaffirmation of the Faith by which the Church has lived since the beginning.*

*The other two chapters in this section consider the approach to modern man in his perplexities, points at which he is most accessible to the Gospel, and some at which he specially needs to hear its message. One chapter considers the Gospel as the response to needs of which man is conscious; the other presents it rather as the message which man needs to hear but is unwilling to listen to. The Gospel must always proclaim that message, which is most unwelcome to natural man, that the wages of sin is death.*

## THE FAITH BY WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES<sup>1</sup>

**W**E live by faith in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Above all and in all and through all is the holy will, the creative purpose, of the Most High. The world is His and He made it. The confusions of history are in the grasp of His manifold wisdom. He overrules and works through the purposes of men, bringing to nought their stubborn and rebellious lust for power but building their fidelity into the structure of His reign upon earth.

Man is the child of God, made in His image. God has designed him for life in fellowship with Himself, and with his brothers in the family of God on earth. Yet in the mystery of the freedom which God has given him, man chooses to walk other paths, to seek other ends. He defies his Father's will. He seeks to be a law unto himself. This is the deepest cause of the evil and misery of his life. Alienated from God he seeks his salvation where it cannot be found. Impotent to save himself, he stands ever in need of conversion, of forgiveness, of regeneration.

Who then shall save? God saves, through Jesus Christ our Lord. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is the heart of the Christian gospel, the gospel which we proclaim.

God in His infinite love has acted for men's salvation. He has come among them in Jesus of Nazareth, His Word made flesh. In Him, He has conquered the power of sin and death. Jesus Christ in His teachings and life of perfect love recalls men to that which God would have them be, and brings them to shame for their betrayal of His expectation. Through His faith and perfect obedience they come to trust the only true God. His suffering and death on calvary bring them to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin and assure them of God's pardon. His resurrection is the victory of holiness and love over death and corruption. Through His risen and living presence, men who dedicate their wills to Him become with Him partakers of eternal life.

<sup>1</sup> Affirmation reprinted from *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations* of the meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12-29, 1938.



In the strength and joy of forgiveness, daily renewed at the foot of the Cross, they are made more than conquerors over every evil.

For Christ, the Kingdom of God was central. He called His followers to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness. Through acceptance of His call to suffering love and through trust in divine help, men are summoned to be co-workers with Him for the increase of justice, truth and brotherhood upon earth. His kingdom is both within and beyond this world. It will be consummated in the final establishment of His glorious reign of love and righteousness, when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth where death and sin shall be no more.

To the gift of Christ, God has added the gift of His Holy Spirit in the Church. Christ's true Church is the fellowship of those whom God has called out of darkness into His marvellous light. The guidance and power of the Spirit are given to this Church that it may continue Christ's saving work in the world. It seeks to build up its own members in the knowledge of Christ, challenging them anew with the message of His redeeming love, comforting them with the assurance of God's forgiveness in Him, teaching them the way of love through service for their brethren in Christ.

For those that are without Christ the true Church yearns with the love of its Master and Lord. It goes forth to them with the evangel of His Grace. It practises His ministry of compassion and healing. It bears witness against every iniquity and injustice in their common life. It bears their sorrows and heart-ache on its prayers. To it is given the solemn privilege of entering into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.

In spite of all the weakness and shortcomings of our churches, Christ's true Church is within them; and our hope for the redemption of mankind centres in His work through them. Through the nurture and discipline of the Church, Christian life comes to completion; in glad service within the fellowship of the Church, Christian devotion is perfected.

## THE GOSPEL IN ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT TIME

*by Walter M. Horton*

**T**HERE is a hunger in the world to-day for good news. Most news is bad news. To read the morning newspaper at the breakfast-table is to risk getting indigestion, if one reflects too deeply upon the implications of what one reads. Year after year, our minds and our hearts have been battered and bruised with bad news. Who will show us anything good?

The Christian Gospel is "good news". But people hungry for good news are for some reason not reaching out eagerly for the Gospel. The word has an antique flavour; its meaning has been forgotten. And the contents of the Gospel, as ordinarily presented, do not sound like news; they sound irrelevant to the present hour; they do not speak to men's condition.

The *Gospel itself*, of course, is not something to be discovered by analysing contemporary conditions, and attempting to improvise an answer to modern problems. The Gospel *has happened*. As the Tambaram Confession reminds us, "God in His infinite love *has acted* for men's salvation . . . *has come among them* in Jesus of Nazareth, His word made flesh . . . *has conquered* the power of sin and death." The news that God has thus acted must therefore always be essentially the same news, "yesterday, to-day and for ever".

The duty to *preach* the Gospel is likewise an invariable duty, derived primarily from the impact of the Gospel itself, not from the state of the world. Those whom God has "visited and redeemed", those whom He has released from the powers of darkness and brought over into light and peace, cannot possibly keep the news to themselves. Gratitude to God, plain justice to those not privileged as yet to hear and know of God's graciousness in Christ, require that the news be told, whether men hear or whether they forbear. But the Gospel is not told in love, unless every effort is made to relate it to the actual condition of contemporary men.



There is no easy short cut to the preaching of the Gospel to-day. What is required, if the Gospel is to go home to the hearts of the people, is a work of theological reflection which will effectively relate the perennial affirmations of the Christian Faith to the actual questions and the felt needs of the present generation. Because God has made man in His own image, we know that we can count on the fact that there *is* some correspondence between man's need and Divine Grace.

In our own time this correspondence evidently exists at four points: (1) between the universal longing for *security* and faith in *God the Father Almighty*; (2) between the world-wide hunger for *peace and fellowship* and faith in *Christ the Reconciler*; (3) between the general *weariness and mental lassitude* with which our age is afflicted, and the *inward refreshment and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit*; finally, between the *despairing hope* which makes our contemporaries clutch at straws, and the *hope-beyond-despair* which enables Christians calmly to steer through rough waters by the pole-star of *God's everlasting Kingdom*.

#### I SECURITY AND ALMIGHTY GOD

Our world is insecure, and knows it. It looks backward with nostalgic regret, knowing that the ordered, stately stability of nineteenth-century society is gone for ever. It knows that multitudes of our contemporaries have been bombed out of their homes, torn from their families, driven from their native lands, herded like cattle into great huddled masses of lostness; and sees no adequate assurance, in any existing scheme of "collective security", that a similar fate, or worse, may not overtake anyone now on earth, any time, anywhere. It knows no defence against the atomic bomb, feels no confidence in any nation's promise not to do indefensible things in self-defence.

"Freedom from want, freedom from fear"—how eagerly our world responded to these slogans! Economic security and political security were dreams that kept many living on, through the hardships and multiplied insecurities of war, in hope of the final day of liberation. Now that "liberation" is accomplished, it has become clear that the post-war world is still famine-ridden and fear-ridden, fundamentally less secure than the world of 1939, and must be expected to remain so for an indefinite length

of time. Where is safety, where is shelter, where is there any impregnable stronghold in such a world?

The Christian answer is, "*In God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.*" Just before the outbreak of war, in a world already "shaken to its foundations", the Tambaram Confession enunciated this basic faith in God the Creator in words that still sound prophetic and pointed in this post-war era: "Above all and in all and through all is the holy will, the creative purpose, of the Most High. The world is His and He made it. The confusions of history are in the grasp of His manifold wisdom. He overrules and works through the purposes of men, bringing to nought their stubborn and rebellious lust for power, but building their fidelity into the structure of His reign upon earth."

In such a God, Ruler over all because He is the primal Source from Whom all being and all power are derived, many have found secure refuge in these stormy times, and many more would welcome the good news that there is such a refuge, if the way to a living trust in the Almighty Father could be clearly pointed out to them.

But even an utterly convincing experience of God's protecting power quickly becomes unreal to the person who has had it, or is perverted into superstitious magic in his mind, unless he finds adequate interpretation for it. It is the Christian Church's great privilege and duty to interpret all such experiences as evidences of the constant sustaining power of One Who is no mere private protector of a few miracle-men, but the universal Father of all His creatures; One Who disciplines them severely when they go counter to the law He has written in their hearts, but delivers them as often as they turn to Him for help. But the Church must also make clear what *kind* of "deliverance" is promised; she must keep the way open to a durable trust in the Almighty God by a sober, credible doctrine of divine Providence, that squares with the tragic facts of life; still more by her own steadfastness and unwavering confidence under hardship and persecution, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame".

In its interpretation of the meaning of trust in the Almighty Father, the Church must not stress God's *power* at the expense of God's *love*. At bottom the modern hunger for security is a



hunger for love, for feeling "at home" somewhere—cared for and understood by someone who will "never let you down". In our increasingly depersonalized society, such love is cruelly hard to find. Where will a Negro or a Jew look to find it among his fellow-men? Men join power-blocs and follow dictators because it makes them feel less alone, less lost, less defenceless; but there is no final security in loveless, ruthless power. Uneasily, men realize that the power which protects them while they are useful may at any moment trample them under foot, if they become more of a burden than a help. In such a world, it is good news that there is One Whose name is Father, not only as Primal Source and Supreme Power, but as the eternal redemptive Love that will not let us go. To believe this is not easy. Christian preaching needs the support of Christian loving and Christian living, if it is to make a real impression on humanity to-day.

## II PEACE ON EARTH, AND CHRIST THE RECONCILER

Every Christmas, when the story of the birth of the Saviour is read in the churches, and echoes of it resound in the press, an almost audible sigh<sup>1</sup> of longing arises in response to the angel's proclamation of "peace on earth". Modern men do little conscious praying; but they pray unconsciously for peace with their whole being, as trees pray for rain in time of drought, or animals for food in time of famine.

The Christian answer to this prayer is *Christ the Reconciler*. "For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Even in our churches, whose testimony is weakened by their unhappy divisions and their many worldly entanglements, the work of Christ has actually brought about a state of peace and reconciliation between recent enemies, to which there is no analogy in the world of nations.

At the Stuttgart meeting of church leaders from many nations in 1945, Martin Niemöller's candid words of confession at once brought forth acknowledgment of complicity in guilt from his fellow-Christians; and on the basis of mutual forgiveness peace

<sup>1</sup> I heard a literally audible sigh arise from a Parisian audience at a performance of James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* in 1937. When the first caption was thrown upon the screen, and the idea of Shangri-la—a place free from the threat of war—was set before their minds, the whole audience sighed in unison.

was sealed between them. Let Niemöller himself express this Gospel in his own words:

“His name, ‘Prince of Peace’, is not His name in vain. If He has come to bring forgiveness of sin, He has come to bring peace between God and mankind and at the same time He brings peace between men. That is the one peace which really can be established and cannot be overcome, the peace which may exist between those who know about the forgiveness of sin and who, as sinners who have been forgiven, become brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Niemöller is only one conspicuous instance of Christ's work of peace and reconciliation in our time. From the opposite end of the earth come the following words, in a letter from a Japanese friend: “We, all Japanese, are awful sinners. While we think about war, we are fallen into a deep and strong suffering that is of sin. . . . Not only that your people treat us very kindly. We are facing the greatest opportunity to repent under the Cross of Jesus. . . . I have much and strong pain about it. . . . I pray the profound and real peace of the world. The whole world ought to come beneath the Cross. The Lord's prayer shall be realized.” How can I rightly answer my friend in Japan, except by saying that we Americans, too, have great sins to confess, and by praying with him that our whole world may find “profound and real peace . . . beneath the Cross?”

Between Christians, mutual forgiveness is natural and seldom misunderstood; in the world at large, it is generally confused with weakness. Because of this common confusion, it is not easy to pass from the accomplished fact of Christ's peace among repentant Christians to the general “peace on earth” for which the world still longs in vain. The modern world wants peace, but is it willing to bend beneath Christ's yoke, and learn of Him? Apparently not yet. But if the Church can go on being a little oasis of “profound and real peace” in the midst of universal strife and confusion, some day the world may be willing to pay the price of admission to that charmed circle.

What the world *needs* and what the world *wants* are, of course, not the same thing. The world *wants* something negative—

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Cleveland, Ohio, reported in *Current Religious Thought*, March 1947.



peace in the sense of absence of conflict, permitting everyone to pursue his interests undisturbed. The world *needs* something more positive—real fraternity, real community, real fellowship, which would so unify men's interests in allegiance to one Chief End that they would no longer clash. Real fellowship is God's great gift to the Church, renewed as often as Christ the Reconciler brings His followers to active, positive, joyful peace with one another after each breach of right relations. Only God can finally quicken man's need for fellowship into an active sense of *want*, but the Church can at least avoid scandalizing people by quarrelling in public, and at best exhibit the kind of family feeling that makes people wish they belonged to that family.

### III MENTAL LASSITUDE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our post-war era is not only tormented with a sense of insecurity and an unsatisfied longing for peace and fellowship. It is oppressed with a feeling of *mental lassitude* alternating with feverish, ineffective activity—something akin to a collective neurosis. Every war is followed by a period of mental and moral reaction, and this is proving no exception. To be sure, there is nothing quite parallel to the complete disillusionment and cynicism that followed the First World War. This time, our idealism in fighting the war did not fly so high, so it could not fall so low. No one expected this war to cure all our ills; it was popularly described as "a dirty job that had to be done". Yet if the extreme reaction of the "twenties" is not being repeated, there are many signs of the weariness, exhaustion, peevishness, indifference, mental confusion, and moral inertia which weigh down men's minds and dull their consciences after every great effort.

Average men are magnificent when their backs are against the wall, and hearth and home are at stake; they lapse into triviality and slackness when the immediate danger is over. Having no inward dynamo to keep them going, they simply "go dead" when the external current is cut off. More than one war veteran has found civilian life such a "let-down" after the excitement and glamour of war that he has taken to his bed, and refused to get up. While such cases are extreme, our whole population is suffering from mental and moral "let-down". Life seems "flat, stale and unprofitable".

The Christian answer to this prevailing state of mental lassitude is not an argument, not a doctrine, not even a method of treatment, but *a power*; the regenerative, re-creative, re-directive, refreshing and sustaining power of the *Holy Spirit*. The Apostle Paul knew this power well, and he knew its moral fruits: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," dispositions diametrically opposed to the mood of lassitude. It was this power, proceeding from God through Christ, residing in the Christian *Koinonia*, and "falling upon" many, on their first contact with the Christians, like a sudden shock from a high-voltage current—it was this power, received probably through the conductive medium of the martyred Stephen, which had transformed the Apostle from a divided and distracted man into one with a clear mission, and an inexhaustible inward source of strength and joy. Sometimes he refers to this inward source as Christ-possession, sometimes as Spirit-possession, but both terms refer to the same phenomenon. In his famous testimony, "I can do all things through Him who inwardly empowers me" (Phil. iv, 13), either Christ or the Spirit may be referred to. After all, "The Lord is the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is not just any power that may take possession of man—as for example Friedrich Nietzsche and Adolf Hitler were sometimes visited by an imperious sense of inspiration that lifted them out of themselves. It is specifically that Spirit of Jesus that led Him to Calvary for our redemption. Courage to live and to die in the strength of that Spirit. What does the world need more than that!

It has often seemed as though the power of the Spirit had died out of the Church. It *has* died out in certain churches, and they have withered like sapless branches of an otherwise fruitful vine. But somewhere at all times in the many-branched vine, even in the coldest winters, the life of the Spirit has continued; and from time to time this life has risen again with startling force. The prime condition for such a spiritual awakening seems to be a *worshipping fellowship* of devoted Christians, an intimate "cell" group of some sort, deeply convinced that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint". Such groups are sources of life in many local congregations at the present day.

If the jaded lassitude of our discouraged times is to be over-



come by a new wave of spiritual vigour and moral renewal, it cannot be done by simply pointing to the testimony of Scripture. Rightly or wrongly, to the men of our time the Bible seems far away and long ago. If the Bible comes alive to them, it will only be because they see that it is essential to the life of a group that makes an immediate testimony to the power of the Spirit. As an instance of such living testimony, consider the following letter written by the members of a metal-workers' union to the members of the Community of Cluny, a Protestant religious order in Eastern France:

“Our opposition and indifference towards the bourgeois Church made us dubious of contacts with Christians.

So our first encounters with the Community of Cluny were full of curiosity and scepticism.

But in the course of regular meals and conversations, we came to understand that there were Christians who wished to have all things in common. This first point made us abandon our scepticism. Then the fact that the urgency of profound social and economic reforms was felt on both sides, drew us still closer together.

It was only much later that we asked to be instructed in the truths of the faith and understood that this also had meaning for us.”<sup>3</sup>

It is deeply significant that many Christian groups in various lands and different communions are now springing up, dedicated to worship, study and fellowship, aiming to live out the meaning of the Gospel in their common life as the Spirit shall reveal it to them, and then to apply the laws of Christian fellowship to the solution of the social problems of our time. In these experimental movements the power of the Spirit is beginning to be poured out afresh, for the renewal of the life of the Church.

#### IV DESPAIRING HOPE, AND GOD'S KINGDOM

It is often remarked that the best evangelistic approach to modern men is through their intense concern for social problems, and their desire to get closer to the root of social ills than any secular programme of reform can bring them. This is true,

<sup>3</sup> Roger Schutz, *Introduction à la Vie Communautaire*, p. 10.

but there is one great difficulty with this approach: our contemporaries are losing interest in social problems, because they are losing hope of their solution in any form; they are in a state of near-despair, clutching eagerly at straws, only to cast them bitterly aside and resolve not to be duped again.

A certain kind of Christian optimism has no "word" for men in this mood—American "activists" of breezy Utopian type would cut no ice among people in acute distress in Europe and Asia. Nor would the European Christians who preach the "Gospel of despair" be any help either. We must be grateful that the contrast between Christian "optimism" and "pessimism" is much less than formerly. Both together are drawing nearer to the real answer: the promise of God's Kingdom, which alone can save the world from its present despair.

The Christian hope of the Kingdom, as found in the New Testament and echoed in church history, is neither Utopian nor pessimistic. The modern hope of progress through scientific and technological mastery of Nature is now generally seen to be Utopian. Communist hope is Utopian. Christians know that all such hopes are deceptive; they have seen what men of power did to their Lord.

But Christians have also seen their Lord rise victorious over the men of power who thought they had disposed of Him; and they have seen Christ's "little ones", the humble and meek to whom He addressed His Beatitudes, show remarkable resilience and staying power in quiet, patient resistance to the efforts of many strong rulers (from Nero to Hitler) to break their stubborn loyalty. This realistic hope, which has passed through and beyond despair, delivers them from pessimism, and gives them a pole-star by which to steer through all the vicissitudes of history, even those terrible ones that now beset us: the ultimate triumph, at the end of history, of the God Who revealed His power and glory as well as His merciful justice at the turning-point of history, in the humble and majestic figure of Jesus.

In thought, in teaching and in *action*, Christian hope-beyond-despair will prove its power to answer and correct the false, despairing hope that deludes and tantalizes our generation. New Testament eschatology and apocalyptic are not expressed in language which our age can comprehend—though our mood is really an apocalyptic mood, which with a little encouragement



might understand the darkest enigmas of Daniel and Revelation. Such understanding must come from groups of Christians who through steadfast hope outlive and outplan and outmanoeuvre all their adversaries; who work steadily on when others succumb to mental lassitude and despair; who undertake constructive projects when the world is going to pieces all about them; who hopefully plan and build to the glory of God when human wisdom would counsel not to waste the effort.

Almighty God the Creator, Christ the Reconciler, the Holy Spirit our Comforter, and the hope of God's everlasting Kingdom—these Christian affirmations not only answer the needs of our time, but constitute the perennial framework of our faith. None of these affirmations is finally to be separated from any of the others. There is a redeeming love as well as creative power in the Almighty Father, security as well as peace in Christ the Reconciler, fellowship and hope as well as inspiration and courage in the work of the Holy Spirit. But these affirmations sum up between them the four great acts of God—three already enacted and one yet to come—wherein the whole biblical drama of human history is comprehended. The One God revealed in these four great acts is, we believe, the source from Whom all blessings flow, the answer to every human need, the complete and final cure for the modern sense of the *meaninglessness of existence*—if only men will meet the conditions He lays down. The Christian evangelist knows that the divine conditions and terms on which true security, peace, fellowship, courage and hope are to be had, are *bad news* to the natural man—bad news, which in loyalty to the God of truth must not be concealed. But he hopes that the richness of the divine blessings, the adequacy of the divine answers, the meaningfulness of the new life in God, may overcome the resistance of man's lower nature, since they correspond to deep hungers God has implanted in all His creatures. It is one of the main tasks of good evangelism to make these correspondences specifically clear, in terms of the specific mood and temper of our time.

THE GOSPEL IN ITS RELEVANCE TO THE  
PRESENT TIME

by *Pierre Maury*

**T**HE Gospel message is the life-blood of the Church. Every society draws upon the ideal which it embodies and expresses. In a far deeper sense, Jesus Christ founded the Church to be first of all missionary. Take away the missionary message, and the Church has lost its *raison d'être*.

The proclamation of the message certainly involves the creation of a community. And this community is not merely—like other communities—an association whose members share the same conception of life and conduct. Its very existence constitutes the *mystery* of a supernatural unity, what St. Paul called the “mystery of the Church” (Eph. v, 32), the Body of the Christ, risen and seated at the right hand of God. But the life of this Body is continuously maintained by those who are grafted into it, by its new members. The Church is concerned with *all* nations (Matt. xxviii, 19). Not indeed for reasons of earthly power nor in the proselytizing spirit of great human organizations or movements; but because Jesus Christ offers Himself as the Saviour of *all*. He “gathers together in one” (Eph. i, 10) in His own person and His own work “all things which are in heaven and on earth”. Without the Church’s witness, the Lordship of Christ is not exercised according to His will. Unless the good news of Christ is announced *to all*, the world is lost in fatal ignorance and can only follow paths which lead nowhere.

Hence the preaching of the Gospel is the central problem of the Church’s life—not a technical problem, but a question of life or death; not a modern problem, but a perennial demand and a perennial difficulty.

.....

This problem involves two equally intrinsic elements: the *truth* or rather the fidelity of the Church’s preaching—what the



New Testament calls the "uncorruptness and gravity" of "sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Titus ii, 8)—and its *intelligibility*. Unsound, or in a sealed book, the Gospel is equally idle.

In other words, the Church has to speak about the God of eternity, and about the age to come, to men who are dwellers in time, living according to the fashion of this transitory world. If the Church has nothing to say about eternity, it had better say nothing at all. And if it speaks about eternity as if it were already there and out of touch with history—no one will listen. In either case Jesus Christ will be betrayed.

Now this twofold condition represents a twofold test for the Church; in Bible language a twofold *temptation*. Sometimes, with its eyes on the age in which its message is given, the Church adapts itself to the present and confines itself to relative truths as ephemeral as the people who hear them. Sometimes, knowing that its message goes beyond the changes and chances of history, the Church talks a "timeless" language which is a foreign tongue to the world, and its message becomes bloodless and abstract. In one case it spoils its preaching with inept apologetics; in the other it dooms itself to cryptic mysteries. (In every age of history it would be easy to illustrate the Church's halting between the two duties laid upon it by God; has it not sometimes been possible to accuse it of Byzantinism—even when it was affirming the eternal nature of the mystery of Jesus Christ over against a perishing world; and at other times to reproach it for such subservience to the age that its message became a "philosophy of enlightenment"?)

Still a clear distinction should be drawn between the two demands which the life of the Church can never escape. These demands are not of equal importance, or rather one is subordinate to the other. In the summary of the Law, the second commandment is like the first and should be equally obeyed, but only on condition that it *follows* the first; in just the same way the Church's preaching is only true to man's need if it is *first* true to Jesus Christ. To man in his concrete situation, the Church tells the truth about himself and his destiny only if it speaks to him about Jesus Christ "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever" (Heb. xiii, 8), i.e. only if its language is not that of "*the present age*". The Gospel explicitly claims to be "a mystery and a hidden wisdom" which no man knows until there

are proclaimed to him things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. ii, 9)—in theological language, to be a *revelation*. Any preaching which discards or discounts this note of its witness is doomed to failure in obedience and loyalty.

But if so, the question suggested by "The Relevance of the Gospel to the Present Time" implies a precise answer. The Church has no obligation to exhibit, between the present age, modern man and contemporary civilization and its own message, such harmony and concord as would ease its task in bringing to them the Word of the Gospel. Far from it, the Church must expect that the Gospel—to-day as always—will proclaim something *different* from what modern man says and demands. Often there will be *contradiction* rather than agreement between the Word of the Church and the words of the world. Just when the Church's message contradicts the thought of modern man it will really fulfil his deepest expectations. For what man really desires is not what he thinks or imagines that he desires; it is what, according to the will of God, he *needs*. The greatest service that the Church can render will be to tell people not what they can quite well tell themselves, but what they do *not* know and yet unconsciously seek and ensue.

Hence the one problem for the Church, now as always, is to uncover that ignorance of God which the wisdom of the day hides: to witness to that Revelation, foreign to humanity, of which she is the ambassador, in terms as plain, precise and up to date as they are strictly faithful to the truth.

What are the truths which the world to-day repudiates, and the Church must proclaim in language that the world can understand? Evidently those to which the Church has borne witness ever since the days of Christ on earth. For the ways in which men go astray are fundamentally the same, and so is the content of Revelation. There is no more real novelty in heresies and idolatries than in orthodoxy.

This obstinacy of error, and this identity of truth, is briefly comprehended in this, that, while God claims to be adored, loved and served, Himself Alone in what He is, what He has done, what He is doing and will do, the sin of man will always consist in refusing all or part of this adoration, love and service in order to apply them to his own ends. But this self-deification of man takes different shapes at different times, and the Church must



penetrate every disguise, so that its eternal message may be God's Word for to-day.

In our diagnosis, we should not be satisfied with the obvious symptoms of the sickness of society. For instance, man is plainly afraid and in search of security; he is proud of his unprecedented technical achievements and absorbed in his material successes. This being so, it is clear that in proclaiming the goodness of God in creation and redemption—His Providence, or in reminding man that "he does not live by bread alone", the Church will speak to his condition. Nevertheless, the Church needs a deeper reading of present realities if it is to discover afresh and to preach the Christian message in terms of the day.

To me personally it seems that the sin of modern man, and his wretchedness, are shown in three special fields: *modern man believes in history, he knows nothing of forgiveness, and is fumbling after a working morality.*

It is to this man, the worshipper of his special idols and the victim of his own illusions and terrors, that the Church must speak about the God Who throws down idols and frees men from despair and from death. As the Church has never any other message than the name of Jesus Christ, we may say that to-day it must publish His name as *Judge, Saviour and Lord.*

#### MODERN MAN'S FAITH IN HISTORY AND CHRIST THE JUDGE OF HISTORY

The signs of modern man's blind confidence in history are manifest. At one and the same time he imagines that he is making history and knows that he is determined by history. Thus the pride, typical of our epoch, is matched only by its fatalism. People talk about creating a new civilization, even a new humanity, different from any hitherto known and yet feel helpless to avert the destruction of the human race by their technical inventions. For example, it is striking to see side by side, sometimes in the same person, the basic optimism of the communist and the apocalyptic terror inspired by atomic power. Thus our civilization sways between the intoxication of its own creative power and craven surrender to extinction by the work of its own hands.

But a deeper uncertainty underlies this paradoxical inner

conflict. *Above all, our world suffers from having no Judge.* To give worth to its efforts and its destiny it has nothing but itself. It is only from an earthly future that it expects any verdict on the present. So a master of French politics entitles his diagnosis of the contemporary scene, "History will judge"—a standard formula for the modern mind. Pragmatism of the nursery! Historical results can furnish no yardstick. First because "results" imply some external measure of their creative value. Even so, their value vanishes in the evolutionary process in which they occur. No effort can be warranted by its success, for success is relative to the judgment which assesses it; and no success is the last of the series. The recognition that progress is a myth has long ago taught us that trust in the verdict of history is an illusion. But our age, though it no longer believes that evolution is necessarily beneficent, is more than any other age subject to the fascination of the future. In the depths of its spirit, it is stirred by Messianic hopes; its eyes are always on the future, not only to quicken its activities, but as the sole reward of toil.

There are two catches in this relative thinking. First, selflessness little short of absolute is demanded of the individual. The makers of history are never to hear the verdict, which will be delivered when they are in their graves. That is not the worst. If nothing but history is real, then there will be no verdict at all. History cannot cry *finis* to itself, and the human adventure indefinitely prolonged has no goal and therefore no sense. The astringent wisdom of the Preacher proclaiming the vanity of all which ends only to begin over again was not "new under the sun". What marks our age is the blind folly of its ambitions and dreams. The Great White Throne was for Western civilization until the nineteenth century a certainty: in the Middle Ages an obsession. It therefore had a standard of moral judgment as well as hope and a mission in life. Our age has no rules left, and no real trust in the future.

It is this modern man, the victim of his own vain trust in history, that the Church addresses. It can only meet this idolatry by preaching this essential element of the Christian message: *the world and history have an end*: they are moving towards it as well as limited by it. And this *end* is not a date like any other—the end of the world, the last event in history. It is a *verdict* pronounced by the ever-transcendent Creator of



the universe. History judges nothing; it is subject to its Judge. History will be stopped one day, not by arriving at its end, but by the decree of Another. This is what we are told by the Preacher at the end of his lucid, sceptical confession. His real meaning is shown in the last verse of his book: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. xii, 13-14).<sup>1</sup>

In order to preach this message, the Church is not called upon to elaborate philosophies of history. These would be just as arbitrary—even if they called themselves Christian—as when they are invented by experts who take no account of God. Nor should the Church preach a Gospel of the Beyond, which disparages human history and its vicissitudes. Above all, it should not promise compensation in heaven for the miseries of earth; Eternity, thought of as a reward or as an indemnity, would be only a vain extension of the vanity of Time.

The Church must re-learn the meaning of history. This means that it must first of all heed everything that happens in time and treat it seriously, from the most trivial events to sweeping collective movements, from personal decisions of faith or scepticism to the great battles which the Church has had to fight. "God will bring every work into judgment." But above all the Church must announce God's activity in history, which in Jesus Christ and His Incarnation gives Time its divine value. The Church must also respect history, because it knows that since the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ the meaning of every period of history has become clear (has been "fulfilled" to use the language of the Bible), and now the world only awaits the visible manifestation of this fulfilment. We have arrived at the final stage of history. We are living in "the last days" (Heb. ix, 26; 1 Cor. x, 11; 1 Pet. i, 20). Hence our attitude to history is that of *expectancy*, watchful, active and ardent; expectancy of history's final goal.

More than this, the Church, aware that it is living in "these last days", must speak in a way apt to this particular epoch; and this epoch is the interval between the Ascension of Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that when Paul wanted to preach the Gospel to the pagan Athenians, he spoke to them *first* about God's judgment in Christ (Acts xvii, 31).

to the right hand of God and His return in glory. The Church always expresses the same truth; but not always in the same way at all times. The Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New say the same thing of Christ, Who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever (Heb. xiii, 8), but not from the same angle. So the Church to-day must preach the same message as ever, but matched to the hour. What distinctive features of this "Interval" mark its basic difference from other ages? Let us say simply that the Gospels (Matt. xxiv and parallel passages) specify outwardly an increase of great catastrophes (wars and cosmic cataclysms of a more and more terrible nature), and within the Church an increase in infidelity and apostasy, and love grown cold; but at the same time they foretell that the Church, even though greatly reduced in strength (Matt. xxiv, 12-14), will be more missionary than ever (Matt. xxviii, 19). Then the Church must neither be surprised at its own apparent failure nor discouraged; on the contrary, it will be the time for sure hope and watchful expectation; the time of the antichrists, but also the time immediately preceding the glorious and unmistakable return of the Son of God.

The fact that the Church of to-day is speaking during this particular period of history ought to give her message a special emphasis and certainty. She should be fearless when everything seems to deny and to repudiate her message.

. . . . .

The Church must therefore preach the truth of the Bible eschatology—in a way suited to the times. Thus the message will assume an urgency and effect which it has too often lost. Thus she will preach with confidence and hope. And thus without artifice or accommodation to human ideas, she will meet the real desires, unavowed and often unconscious, of modern man. For if modern man no longer dreams of Paradise Lost but of a future Golden Age, it is because without this future he has nothing left to choose, to do or to expect. It has often been noted that the main attraction of the totalitarian mysticisms, especially the mysticism of communism, is found in the promises which it makes to the men of to-day. Those who understand this tremendous modern religion best are clear that it is the idealism of historic materialism (though the contradiction in terms is formal) which gives it its drive. Only a Christian eschatology,



quiet and confident, can stand up to this messianism, can make life worth living again for the prisoners of a hope which is mundane and built on sand.<sup>2</sup>

This is not the time or place to recall the central elements of this Christian eschatology. We shall merely say that it must be expressly *totalitarian* and not individualistic, it must be cosmic and not tepidly humanist. The return of Christ to judge the living and the dead, and by His verdict to inaugurate the Kingdom of God, must be trumpeted with all St. Paul's and St. John's glory in the splendour of Christ, the Christ by Whom and for Whom *all things* were made. On these heights any pettiness, any churchiness becomes impossible, and the actual relations between the Church and the world can be made clear. Eschatology (and not any doctrine concerning the Orders of Creation) is the one thing which can restore the Church's freedom in face of the world, and its sure expectation that this world will be brought to judgment.

#### MODERN MAN'S IGNORANCE OF FORGIVENESS AND JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR

It is not surprising that modern man, who places his faith in history, repudiates the idea of *forgiveness*. For history does not forgive. History deals with what *has happened* and is therefore beyond repair and pardon. Hence those who place their confidence in history alone can no longer grasp the essentially Christian reality of the *remission of sins*. From this it follows that the tragic *motif* of our atheistic age turns about *an unsatisfied need for justification*.

In every age, indeed, man has refused to be a "miserable sinner". In every age the "hatred of grace"—the true form of original sin—flares up in man's passionate desire to assert his innocence as well as his rights. In every age man repeats, like Adam, "It is not my fault", thus showing that self-justification is the very heart of sin. And in every age this assertion of one's own integrity is naturally paired with imputations against others (Adam accuses Eve, Eve accuses the serpent). Excusing one's self always leads to accusing others. . . . But this per-

<sup>2</sup> I recall the significant revolt of a young communist who protested only against one of my Christian affirmations, that of the Last Judgment. "By what right do you dare to announce this event," he said, "which if it took place would change the whole of ethics and the whole of human faith?"

manent tendency in human nature appears to-day in a special form.<sup>3</sup>

First, it is no longer exclusively or chiefly related to the individual obsessed by personal failure. It is expressed in the public utterances of parties, nations and classes. For instance, it is significant that the communist religion loudly proclaims the moral *innocence* of the proletariat and the impeccability, even the infallibility, of the "Party"; and at the same time it persistently assails other economic systems and other classes, conveniently regarded as incarnate in America or some other nation. Our age is relentless in the hunt for scapegoats. Hitler's anti-semitism is only the most monstrous example. But, underneath the surface of his self-justification, modern man—including the communist—believes in his own natural goodness. According to him the imperfections of civilization (suffering, injustice, war) are entirely due to non-human factors, such as the uneven distribution of wealth.

This feature of our age should not surprise us. It always emerges when calamities and impending disaster come to disturb man's naïve confidence in his own powers. And the stresses of our civilization may be measured by the violence of the reproaches hurled at one another by parties, races, nations and classes.

Nor need we wonder that modern irreligion often takes the form of an accusation directed first against God and secondly against the Church. When the atheist repeats, "if there were a God . . ." or "it is the Church's fault", he is really asserting his own innocence and trying to believe in it.

But the misery, and doubtless the real agony, of this man is that, for all his imputations against others, he does not succeed in reassuring himself. The more he proclaims his innocence, the less he succeeds in convincing himself of it; so that our time has been called with some justice "the age of the guilty conscience".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This revolt against the idea of sin, this assertion of innocence, has never been expressed more violently nor more logically than by Nietzsche (for instance "Sin, the supreme form of the corruption of humanity", *The Anti-Christ*, fragment 49). It is indispensable to read and meditate upon this brilliant forerunner of modern thought, if we want to understand contemporary Western civilization, which derives most of its main ideas from Nietzsche.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, it is striking to read the last letters written by French communists who were shot during the Resistance. With impressive monotony they all repeat in effect, "I have nothing to reproach myself with. I die with my head high. . . ." I do not know of any more harrowing confession of inward



In face of this tragedy, what should be the message of the Church? First, and above all, the Church must cease to be "conformed to this world" (Rom. xii, 2), as too often in the past two centuries, by allowing itself (more or less consciously) to water down the essentials of the biblical Revelation. The Church must give up confusing evil with imperfection, and sin with mistakes and weakness. It must cease from turning salvation into a merely ethical problem, the problem of "right action", and it must give up every kind of justification by works—those types of Christian atheism and of man's uneasy impiety. In other words the Church must admit God's *accusation against man*, and against herself first. The Church must not try to justify herself by citing her virtues and successes, or by blaming the sin and incredulity of the world.

But this "fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom" for the Church (Ps. cxi, 10), this humility in which it should live and speak, is no adequate definition of her present duty of witness. The Church must learn once again to speak of *free pardon*. For it is futile, nay harmful, for the Church to speak of sin against God unless it also speaks of the *forgiveness of this sin*. It is futile, nay harmful, for it to speak of the insulted righteousness of God unless it also speaks of His justification freely offered. One of the Church's gravest mistakes is undoubtedly to *preach about sin* before proclaiming the remission of sins; in theological terms to *preach the Law before the Gospel*. By this fault the Church lays itself open to all kinds of misunderstanding and provokes nothing but indifference or rebellion.

Thus, as in all great epochs of its history, the Church fulfils her responsibility only by proclaiming *before all* else Christ Jesus and Him crucified. This is the Church's responsibility; it is also her only chance of making herself heard and believed. For outside the Church who proclaims to modern man, tormented by his guilty conscience, God's offer of forgiveness? Who else offers this forgiveness in its reality, as the end of the guilt from which modern man is trying in vain to struggle free, as the opportunity to begin life completely afresh and to have real peace within? Who else offers this deliverance either to individuals or to nations? The world's crown of sorrows lies anguish than these letters. In the same way the whole of "existentialist" literature fails to conceal this fear. The doctrine of "the absurd", i.e. life has no meaning at all, is only a supreme effort at self-justification for a life which is falling in ruins.

in the fact that no word is heard of God's forgiveness—nor of man's forgiveness of man. Hence the violence and despair which overwhelm men's lives and bedevil their relations. Hence also the impossibility of any real justice. For justice can never be restored if it is conceived as nothing more than a perpetual balancing of accounts.

But if this message of *God's righteousness* is to be heard (that righteousness which justifies through forgiveness in Jesus Christ), the Church must not utter stereotyped and unintelligible formulas. It must constantly re-learn the concrete content of the promise made by Jesus "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. vi, 33). The Church must not believe in this promise alone: but it must *really* believe in it.

#### THE SEARCH FOR AN ETHIC. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

This brings us to the third subject which must be included in the teaching of the Church to-day: the moral teaching for which our modern world is seeking and hoping.

The signs of this search are obvious. Far from making us doubt it, the moral chaos in which we live should, on the contrary, be regarded as the visible evidence of this need. For it is not only the grim consequence of the cataclysm of the two world wars. It is the child of the earthquake that has shattered civilization itself.

It may perhaps be said with truth that the end of the age of individualism has brought with it the end of the individualist ethic typical of that age, and has revealed the need for a social morality. The bourgeois of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw his duties as almost exclusively concerned with personal relationships. They demanded primarily personal honesty, charity and morality. Social conditions, political attitudes, international relations did not belong to the sphere of ethical obligation. This limitation of morality to private life led on the one hand, in the secular world, to the actual denial of moral obligation (the inevitable result of the unconscious egoism of bourgeois civilization), and on the other hand in Christian thought to a more or less puritanical pietism. The birth of a



collective age or, to put it briefly, "the birth of the masses" (according to Ortega y Gasset's classical phrase) has forced on our attention the problem of social justice and, above all, the moral problem raised by the existence of the proletariat. Thus the demand for a wider code of ethics has been born again in the modern conscience.

But as the range of ethics has been extended the *absolute validity* of ethical standards has been called in question. Not only have the world deluges which have not yet abated undermined the belief of modern man in the existence of permanent, indubitable "values", and in the possibility of applying them to a reality which appears too complex or too recalcitrant; but the reactionary or revolutionary philosophies of power have led him to regard success as the one and only moral touchstone. "The end justifies the means." This old adage has come to be the accepted wisdom of the greatest movements of our time. It is a fatal one: for when the means are morally indifferent, the end itself cannot preserve the sanctity ascribed to it.

But here again we discover the same inner tragedy which we noted above. Modern a-moralism does not satisfy those who profess it. Never have moral professions been so frequent. Every political speech smacks of a sermon. Every international discussion stalks behind the swelling phrases of the Pharisee. Doubtless despair (which is universally recognized as the dominant note of our generation) throws into relief this vast masquerade. Man to-day longs for the "good" life; he longs for society to be "just", for the nations to cease doing "evil" to one another. He longs for all this. But he no longer believes that these ideals can be real.

What message should the Church give in the midst of this moral yearning, chaos and despair? It is lost labour sadly to bemoan the evils of the time. The Church has too often believed that the sternness of its message consisted in enumerating—with sorrow or anger—the wickednesses of the world, or in exhausting itself in moral exhortation. Needless to say, also, the message of the Church in this sphere would be completely irrelevant and idle if it confined itself—through timidity or acquiescence—to reciting the precepts of individualist morals, on the pretext that no collective change is possible, valid or real, without an individual change of heart.

Here again the Church must learn to "discern the signs of

the times" and "to judge the spirits" (Matt. xvi, 3; 1 Cor. xii, 10), i.e. to recognize, even in the miseries, revolts or nightmares of the world, an urgent appeal that it should be true, in its preaching, to the Gospel of God.

Again, it is impossible here even to sketch what would have to be included to-day in a code in tune with the biblical revelation. But bearing in mind what has been said, we would point out that this ethic must be:

(a) An ethic which is *true to history*, i.e. true to the *whole of life*, both individual and collective, taking full account of the whole of concrete reality, and giving this reality the importance conferred on it by the "creation of all things in Christ Jesus" (Col. i, 16) and the incarnation of Christ—but equally true to the *end of History*, that is, to Christian eschatology.

(b) An ethic which is *true to the demands of justice*, both individual and collective, manifested by the uneasy conscience of modern man; but which is also true to *that other limit*, set by Divine Justification to any claim of man to be able to fulfil the demands of absolute morality: i.e. a personal and social ethic which has a place for *free pardon*: God's forgiveness of man and man's of men.

This specific declaration on moral questions is doubtless the point at which the Church encounters the greatest difficulty in making its message acceptable or even intelligible to the world. In order to overcome this difficulty, the Church needs both courage and vision. It must realize that it will always be accused either of Bolshevism or craven conservatism. It will be criticized by turns as other-worldly and as this-worldly. And above all, it will be criticized for those Christian reservations, which make it impossible to propose for this world an ideal which is final, practicable and adequate. But this difficulty and these criticisms should not deter the Church from endeavouring patiently to discover and to uphold the concrete forms of society in which the outward *signs* of the Lordship of Christ should be visible.

The ethic preached by the Church will never consist of anything but provisional rules, applicable to a transitory world. This ethic will always be characterized, in a double sense, by its *expectancy of the Kingdom*; negatively by rejecting the dream of an ideal to be realized here below; positively by affirming that faith in the coming of the Kingdom is not really faith unless it changes the conduct of those who are sure of its coming. In



other words, the ethic preached by the Church will be equally far removed from the dream of a Christian civilization identified with the Kingdom of God, and from a religion which retires from the world and passively hopes for a heaven reserved for the blessed.

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In these remarks we have often used the expression "the Message of the Church". Of course, this includes both the spoken message and the message "incarnate" in the life of the Church and in that of each of its members. It is only too evident that the reason why people do not believe what the Church *says* is often due to what the Church *does*, and especially to the undeniable ineffectiveness of its message upon its own members. What is the use of the Church speaking, if people can always point to the contrast between "the worth of Christianity and the unworthiness of Christians" (Berdyayev); if they can mock at the spectacle of a Church entrenched in private piety, afraid to venture out on the quest for a social morality, mumbling formulas without experiencing the joy and power they contain; if people can point on the one hand to divisions within the Church tolerated with an easy conscience simply because they are inherited from the past, and on the other hand, to the ignorance of and indifference towards *the real Christian significance* of those questions on which the great Christian confessions have taken their stand in opposition to one another; above all to the spectacle of so many parishes which are incapable of being real *communities* and are divided by internal differences, selfishness and political and social distinctions stronger than their professed unity.

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In conclusion let me say that, if these are some of the features of the Church's message for the world to-day, and if the "relevance" of this message to the world is this *contradiction* between the "present age" and the "age to come", the Church must not expect its message to meet with much success. But the modesty of its earthly hopes should not discourage the Church. For when the Church puts its trust in its own earthly success, it is really playing a losing game. The Lord of the Church did not promise the little flock that when He returned He "would find faith on earth" (Luke xviii, 8). But seeing that

the Church has sure and certain hope for the future of the whole world, its message will always be "good news". And, until the end, there will always be some who are ready to listen to it as the good news for all men. Jesus Christ Himself has promised it (Matt. xvi, 18; xxiv, 12-14).



# V

## THE GOSPEL AT WORK IN THE WORLD

*Synopsis:* Preface – The Ecumenical Approach – The Lay Apostolate – Tensions in Evangelism – Mass Movements – Individual Seekers – Evangelism in the Parish – Evangelism in the Orthodox Church – Revival Mass Meetings – University Missions – The Moral Rearmament Movement – The Need for Fellowship in Evangelism – Religious Films – Religious Broadcasting – Religion in German Schools – Evangelism in Professional Life – The Lost Community – The Iona Community – CIMADE – Industrial Chaplains in Scotland – *La France, pays de Mission?* – Post-Christian Paganism – The Recovery of Community – The Return of the Intellectual *Élite* – An Illustration from Greece – The Conventional Christian – Evangelism, an Ecumenical Task

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### PREFACE

*With a view to the compilation of this chapter a questionnaire was sent out to leaders of evangelistic enterprises in many countries, many friends were approached personally with a request to furnish accounts of what were known to be striking experiments in evangelistic work, and two scholars, one in England, and one in U.S.A., were asked to draw up statements on the present situation of the evangelistic enterprise.*

*After a great mass of material had come in, the Secretary of the Commission was asked to select what seemed to be the most significant experiments, and to draw up this chapter, not as a catalogue of many different types of work, but by the method of choosing significant illustrations from different countries, confessional areas and strata of human life.*

*It is believed that the reading of this chapter will prove encouraging, since it does make manifest that in many ways and many spheres the Gospel is actively at work. But the reader is warned to bear in mind the conclusion that nowhere in the world at present is there any sign of such great movements towards a living Christianity as have marked the greatest epochs of history in the Church in the past.*

# THE GOSPEL AT WORK IN THE WORLD

## THE ECUMENICAL APPROACH

THE evangelistic programme of the early Church was extremely simple. Assured that in Jesus Christ God had spoken His final word to the world, the Christians took it for granted that this word was to be spoken to all nations throughout the world. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the initial fulfilment of the Old Testament promise *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh* (Joel ii, 28), and the representatives of many peoples gathered in Jerusalem on that day were regarded as the first-fruits of the harvest which was to be gathered in from all nations. Analytical criticism of the text of the gospels may question the exact relationship of certain recorded sayings to the words of Jesus Himself; such criticism enhances rather than reduces the weight of the evidence as to the views and convictions of the early Church afforded by such passages as: *All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world* (Matt. xxviii, 19-20).

At a time when eschatological expectation in the form of daily waiting for the *Parousia* was extremely strong, the sense of world mission, apparently contradictory to the eschatological fore-shortening of history, was firmly held and no acute discordance was felt between the two. As a recent writer has expressed it: "This intensity of the numinous realization of the Manifestation of God in Christ, which keeps it from being too closely measured by external events, and so lifts the presence above history, is itself the source of a larger Christian hope for history. Christianity finds itself unable, with all its certainty regarding the ultimate outcome of events, to foreclose the course of history. Whatever happens in the external world, and whatever divine judgment on men and events thereby comes to light, no occurrence, however critical in the human historical sense, not even the Fall of Jerusalem, not even the later collapse of Rome and the Empire, could be regarded as writing *Finis* to the historical



process. And the reason comes from within the Christian experience itself. There is the Christian mission to the world to be gone on with; and this, as it succeeds, expands the horizon of Christian hope. The 'Not yet the End' of early Christian prophecy, which cannot regard any foreseeable event as putting a term to the course of the mission, opens ever new possibilities for the life of the world. So Christianity retains the passion and the ultimate hope of the apocalyptic, but transcends its impatience and its pessimism, its consistent principle 'Go on with your work, whatever happens', is not without significance for us to-day, when, sometimes in despair of history, we are tempted to relapse into apocalyptic moods."<sup>1</sup> *This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations; and then shall the end come* (Matt. xxiv, 14) represents the sober and matured experience of the two first Christian generations. The apocalyptic expectations kept alive in the Church the sense of urgency: the time is short, the Gospel must be preached to all nations; therefore there can be no dallying with the task. But at the same time, the sense of the worldwide task tempered the at first intemperate expectation. The experience of the growing Church led men to see that God's plans were larger than they had at first supposed, and that they would take longer on the historical plane to mature than the ardent hopes and longings of the first generation had admitted.

The association of the apocalyptic emphasis with missionary zeal is a recognizable feature of church history in all ages. Whenever the emphasis has been on the static or evolutionary aspects of the life of the Church, the world task of the Church has taken a subordinate place in its theology and its practice. It is to this fact that we must look perhaps for the explanation of another recurrent phenomenon that in all ages, except the first, the task of world-evangelization has been the preoccupation of the few—and not of the main body of the Church. No Christian body, except perhaps the Church of the Moravian Brethren, has ever been engaged in its totality in the work of the evangelization of the world. It is not difficult to see why this is so. The life of the Church is a state of continual tension between the institutional and the prophetic, between that which conserves the precious heritage of the past and that which reaches out to claim in the name of Christ the new and as yet undiscovered. The

<sup>1</sup> W. Manson, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, July-October 1947, pp. 145-6.

nature of man is acquiescent rather than adventurous; the prophetic therefore always maintains a precarious existence in the Church, the institutional tends to become the means for the suppression, not for the expression, of new life. In these days, it is still true, as in the past, that the world-mission of the Church is the concern of the few; the majority of practising church members would probably not deny in theory the proposition that the Gospel is to be proclaimed throughout the world, and that this is a continuous obligation of the Church until the end of this age; but the urgency of this task has not entered the range of their thinking, or become an integral element of their experience of Christ as the Lord of the Church and as the Lord of history.

The problem of the Church's world mission is the crisis of the ecumenical movement. If an ecumenical movement is not primarily a strategy of world-wide evangelism, then it is nothing but an interesting academic exercise. The development in separation of the International Missionary Council, and of the other great movements Life and Work and Faith and Order may be indicative of a dangerous dichotomy in the Church's thought. The historical and confessional preoccupations of Christian thinking tend always to a static point of view. There are as yet very few signs of ecumenical thinking in the writings of theologians. Ecumenical thinking is that which not merely is aware of the revolution in the state of the Christian Church brought about by its spatial extension in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but also takes seriously the Gospel as that act of God which cannot be understood except as His proclamation of salvation for the whole world, and as that word of God which awaits, for its final interpretation, the contributions to be made by all the nations of the world as they are gathered into the one fellowship of the world-wide Church of Christ. At this point as at so many others, the Church can be the Church only by a return to the New Testament and by the recovery of New Testament perspectives and categories of thought.

The emphasis here laid on the Church as the means and the sphere of evangelization is itself an integral part of New Testament theology. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any suggestion that the Gospel can be thought of out of relation to the Church, the Church itself is an essential part of the Gospel. The message and the mission of Jesus cannot be rightly understood unless we recognize the real continuity, in His mind,



between the old Israel and the new Israel which He was calling out through the covenant in His blood, and the emphasis in His thinking and planning on the community which was to incorporate and also to proclaim the fruits of His redeeming work. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any suggestion that it is possible to be a Christian outside the Church. In the true sense of the words, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is sound New Testament theology. St. Paul treats faith and baptism as the inner and outer aspects of the same experience; to him the question whether salvation depends on faith or on baptism would have appeared meaningless.

It is true that there was a simplicity in the early days of the Church which it is difficult to recover to-day. We are called to deal with two classes of persons, to whose status the New Testament directs no attention—infants baptized but not as yet able to make that response of personal faith without which membership of the Church cannot reach its fulness; and those who though baptized are content with such a remote and rudimentary allegiance to the Gospel that it is difficult to apply to them the glowing terms in which the early Church spoke of the relationship of the redeemed man to God. In neither case are we called to deny the reality of membership in the Church which baptism conveys; we are compelled to allow for the blurring of New Testament simplicities which has come about in the centuries of the Church's life. At this point, the experience of the younger churches comes to our help. The real significance of baptism is much more fully understood by the convert, and even by the non-Christian, where the Church stands over against a non-Christian faith and manner of life. The non-Christian system is a totality. It does not on the whole concern itself greatly with the inner beliefs and convictions of the individual, but it lays its hand on every aspect of his activity in the family and society. It can tolerate interest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and even the profession of inner faith in Him. But baptism is the great and tragic reality. It involves the rejection of one totality and acceptance of another. It puts the individual beyond the possibility of compromise. He has died to the old in order to embrace the new. The real nature of evangelism can be understood when we apply to the quasi-Christian world the insights gained in the non-Christian world. Nominal Christianity itself is a non-Christian or even anti-Christian system. It is a total

way of living which is centred in man and not in God, and therefore is not subject to the will of God, neither indeed can be, all the more dangerous because a measure of conformity to Christian ethical standards may conceal the basic difference between such a position and the reality of Christian faith.

In the Roman Catholic Church there has been a tendency to stress so strongly the outward and corporate as to overlook the necessity of the personal act of will and decision by which the member of the Church becomes a living member. By reaction against this, the Protestant evangelist may fall into the opposite error of proclaiming Christ in detachment from the life of the Church as the Christian reality in space and time. In this case, it is difficult to avoid one or other of the distortions, which come about when Christ is presented as a historical figure in the past, adhesion to whom falls within the category of memory, or as an intellectual ideal or idea, which can be grasped by intellectual apprehension. Neither of these is an approach to the reality of what the New Testament means by faith. Christ is not known until He is known also in His incorporation in the Church. Membership in Him remains unreal, until it is tested by willingness to accept membership in His visible body in all its division and weakness and unattractiveness. The aim of making men Christians must recognize as a necessary part of itself the aim of making them churchmen.

#### THE LAY APOSTOLATE

Another aspect of the evangelistic strategy of the early Church demands mention. It was taken for granted that, though there would be whole-time evangelists, who were entitled to "live of the Gospel", yet every member of the Church would be by vocation a witness and an evangelist. We read in the Acts *they therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word* (viii, 4). Professor Telfer has recently emphasized the importance of this aspect of the life and ministry of the primitive Church. "Have those little ones no share of apostolate? The greatest act of discretion under Christ in the whole history of the infant Church, to wit, the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, took place neither on the initiative of the Twelve, nor of their delegates, but on that of private Hellenist brethren fleeing the persecution at Jerusalem.



After much taking of counsel, and confirmation through the experience of St. Peter, with yet more confirmation from the vocation of St. Paul, St. Luke represents the apostolate-by-title as ranging itself behind the apostolate-by-fact on this supremely important issue."<sup>2</sup> It is well to note what is involved in his apostolate-by-fact. It does not depend on any commission or authorization by the Church. Its motive force is simply the sense that Christ must everywhere be preached, and pity for the intolerable tragedy that any man should die in ignorance of the glorious Gospel that Christ has died for all. It is taken for granted that every Christian will have such a knowledge of the truth as to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him, to defend that faith when it is attacked, to set it forth persuasively when opportunity offers, to present that challenge to personal decision without which the hearer, even when attracted by the Gospel, may escape its implications for himself, to carry that infectious sense of joyfulness and victory, which in the majority of cases is the generative power of conversion, and to guide the neophyte through the difficult stages of temptation and disheartenment, which nearly always follow on the acceptance of the gift of God in Christ.

The attempts now being made by many churches to recover the lay apostolate, and the enthusiasm with which some successful attempts at its recovery have been greeted, indicate the distance which the churches have travelled from the total commitment apparent in the records of the earliest time. Even in bodies which have not gone so far as the Roman Church in making a sharp distinction between the *ecclesia docens* and the *ecclesia discens*, there has always been a strong tendency towards prelacy, that is, the assumption by the ordained ministry of the functions which belong to the body of Christ as a whole. This has a twofold Nemesis; in the first place, it tends to paralyse the activity of the ordinary members of the Church, and so to stunt their spiritual growth; and secondly, it has the result that, when the lay apostolate is in some form restored, it is most difficult to counteract the inveterate tendency of the lay apostles to abandon the advantages of their amateur status, either by joining the ranks of the paid servants of the Church, or by assimilating themselves, perhaps half unconsciously, to the manners and traditions of the professional ministry.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Theological Studies*, July-October 1947, p. 226.

## TENSIONS IN EVANGELISM

The starting-point for all study of evangelism to-day must be the lamentable truth that, in the year 1948, the evangelistic task of the Church has, in many parts of the world, yet to be begun. It is obvious that the greater part of the world is as yet non-Christian, in every sense of that word. Yet that is less than the truth. Precise statistical information is naturally unobtainable. But it can be said with some approximation to the truth that of the people now existing in the world, one third has never so much as heard the name of Christ, and another third has never heard the Gospel so proclaimed as to be intelligible and a possible object of faith. If Christ really died for all, it cannot be the will of God that His Gospel should be so long and so widely unproclaimed.

The ecumenical movement has grown out of the movement which led sixty years ago to the foundation of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union and the World's Student Christian Federation. The slogan of those days was, "The Evangelization of the World in this generation." That phrase is now often discounted as the expression of youthful enthusiasm and visionary ardour. It was not felt as such at the time; it was an attempt to put into a few words a sense both of the purpose of God and of the potentialities existing but as yet largely unrealized in the existing churches. The progress of the movement of world evangelism in the past two generations, in spite of the disasters of wars and the collapse of empires, suggests that the phrase was not after all so visionary. The world as a whole is much more accessible to the Gospel than it was sixty years ago. Modern methods of communication, exploration, modern techniques such as the radio and the films, the mastery of disease, the reduction to writing of all the main languages of the world, have between them eliminated most of the obstacles (except such as are presented by the human limitations of the proclaimers and the hearers of the Gospel) in the way of the missionary enterprise. It is the considered opinion of many Christians well qualified to judge, that, if the churches would return to the Bible and to New Testament Christianity, it is not impossible that, within the next fifty years, the Gospel should be brought within the hearing, if not of all, at least of the great majority of the people now living in the world. Political conditions have closed certain areas to the



work of evangelism; but it is not certain that those doors will remain for ever closed, and in the meantime other immense areas have been opened up, and are accessible without hindrance to the advance of the churches.

At this point, we must not overlook the tension between outward spread and inner strengthening, which is a constant element in the life of the Church. It is impossible that the Church should be healthy, if it has not at all times a strategy and a passion for world-wide evangelism. But its most immediate duty is to evangelize itself. There is not, and never has been such a thing as a completely Christian Church. There was ground for the somewhat petulant outburst of a scholar who cried out for someone to write a book "debunking" the early Church as Dr. Coulton has "debunked" the Middle Ages. There is a tendency to idealize the apostolic Church, and to suppose that all its members lived all the time on the highest level of Christian experience and martyrdom. The early ages of the Church were marked by a dynamic power of expansion never equalled in later centuries. But the truth about them, though less edifying, is much more consoling than the stylized picture drawn by the hagiographer. The early Christians were not by any means all saints; they had in them a large admixture of human weakness and passion. It was through their weakness that God was pleased to perform the miracles of the foundation of His Church and its preservation through the days of the persecutions. But the Church of the Fathers was not a perfect Church; nor need we too much regret that there is no perfect Church to-day.

But even if there were, it would not long remain perfect. The Church can never escape the obligation of reconverting itself. This is due not only to the corrupting influence of man's sinful nature even in the temple of God, but also to the obvious fact that a new generation is all the time succeeding to the old, and that that generation in its turn needs to be converted. To have been born in a Christian family is indeed an advantage, the greatness of which can hardly be imagined by those who have never worked in a non-Christian country. But the predisposition to faith is not the same as faith. In times of stability, it is possible for the Christian tradition to be handed on almost automatically, so that, without any special efforts of evangelization among the young, each generation is only slightly less

Christian than the one which preceded it. But a sudden time of testing not infrequently reveals that what had been taken for faith was really no more than conformity, and had not the inner strength to stand against the rough testing of persecution or of a changed intellectual climate. History shows that it is possible for a Church which is not experiencing year by year the renewal of the Holy Spirit to become completely desiccated and in the end to collapse and disappear. Almost all the churches in Europe are finding themselves under the condemnation that they had taken their own stability far too much for granted, and that their present poverty in man-power and in influence is due in part at least to the failure to realize the urgency of the continuous task of inner evangelization. Conversely, some of the most encouraging evidences of evangelism which will come before us in this study concern the renewed sense in many churches of the primary importance of this very task, and of the serious and enterprising way in which steps are being taken to repair the consequences of long-continued neglect in the past.

Another tension in the evangelistic task is that between the claim of the individual and of the group. An individual is, in a sense, a separate entity, with his own incommunicable and secret life. On the other hand, an individual only reaches the level of personal being through relationship, through membership in a group and a society, by which his thought and actions are at every point conditioned. What is the object of evangelism? Is it to detach the individual from the social group in which he has grown up and to transplant him to another, in which for a long time he will remain an alien, suffering all the disadvantages of being torn up from the soil in which he was naturally rooted? Or is it to touch the group as a whole, so to permeate its life with the spirit of the Gospel that gradually it is possible for the individual to find his Christian faith within the group, the family and the society? The contrast between these two approaches must not be made too absolute. On the one hand, the appeal must be sooner or later to individual decision, and there can be no substitution of a corporate movement for that final personal choice. On the other the aim of all evangelism, even if it involves disrupting the original group, is to give the convert a home in a new society. Yet this contrast of emphasis will meet us at many points in our study. It pre-



sents one of the most interesting problems in the whole field of evangelism and one to which no simple, perhaps no final, answer can be given.

#### MASS MOVEMENTS

This study will concern itself mainly with evangelism in lands which are already partially or nominally Christian. But the distinction between Christian and non-Christian countries, between older and younger churches, is increasingly felt to be artificial. The work of evangelism is one; every part of it throws light on every other. It would be a mistake to disregard the light which can be thrown on problems in the West by similar problems in the East, where they are likely to present themselves in sharper and simpler forms, and where therefore the main issues tend to stand out unconfused by secondary considerations. It may be valuable at the outset of our study to take two illustrations, from Eastern lands, of successful evangelism at the opposite extremes of the evangelistic approach.

In modern missionary history, the so-called Mass Movements among the depressed classes in India present the most spectacular developments.

The character of the movements is determined by the peculiar social structure of India. The different castes in a village, though mutually interdependent in innumerable ways, are separated from one another by a rigid system of rules and barriers. But this segregation externally is balanced by an intensely strong corporate sense within the caste, not merely in a single village, but over wide areas, linked together by intermarriage and relationship. Within the group, life in every aspect is determined by group feeling and the sense of corporate responsibility to an extent which was probably familiar in the small village communities in medieval Europe, but disappeared in the West with the breakdown of feudalism. To be sure, even within such a system, the individual remains an individual still, with his own particular character, hopes and desires. But individual initiative and enterprise are not encouraged, and for an individual to make a decision contrary to the general mind of the group requires qualities of independence which are rare in any society. Inevitably, the Christian movements have followed the social structure. One caste over a wide area may

have been deeply stirred, without any effect at all having been produced on any other caste.

It has often been said that missionaries turned their attention first to the depressed classes, among whom most of the great movements have taken place, thinking that they would be easier soil to work than the more privileged classes. On the whole history does not bear out the charge. The movements among the poor and the disinherited were neither foreseen nor planned. In many areas the beginning of them was almost fortuitous, following upon long and unsuccessful attempts to find access to those to whom the world had been kinder. But once the movements started, they increased in range and numbers, until the inrush into the Church began to resemble an avalanche.

The progress of the movements has in almost every case been the same. The subject of a change of faith would be introduced to a village group by one person who had become interested. For months the subject would be talked over in the village, principally by the elders, but in that freedom of discussion in the open air, which is almost universal in tropical countries. One of the considerations which would weigh most heavily with the old and wise would be the absolute necessity of avoiding a breach in the harmony and integrity of the group. Be the advantages of Christianity what they may, they are dearly purchased by a group which has lived from time immemorial in the security of group life, if the result of the change is the permanent disruption of the existing unity. It has to be admitted that in the minds of these very poor and backward people, the appeal of the Gospel is very far from being limited to spiritual considerations. Desire for fuller life, the hope of education, the possibility of protection from powerful adversaries, all play their part. One of the responsibilities of the evangelist is to see to it that, so far as is humanly possible, no group is accepted for Christian instruction unless there is recognizable at least some element of spiritual desire.

The extent and strength of the movement may be gauged by the fact that in one area of one mission, the Church increased in thirty years from 30,000 to 135,000 adherents. In the Telugu-speaking part of India, considerably more than a million converts have been gathered in.

Critics of the Mass Movements, both Christian and non-Christian, have not been lacking. To the non-Christian, the



whole movement tends to appear as the result of an intense desire on the part of the Christian community at all costs to increase its numbers and its influence in a country more and more governed by democratic methods and by the counting of heads. The criticism of the Christian is on rather different grounds; he is concerned about the purity of the Church, and disturbed by the effect on it of the importation of vast numbers of backward and illiterate people steeped in superstition and in non-Christian ways. The converts are ignorant and superstitious; unless it is possible to provide them over a period of thirty years, that is, until a generation has grown up which has never known heathenism, with constant teaching and pastoral care, it is unlikely that they will ever grow up into a living Church.

On the other hand, the supporter of this method has much to say on his side. No such movement is ever carried through to success without bitter and sometimes long-continued persecution of the new Christians; their willingness to endure persecution is one of the best possible evidences of their faith. A careful study of the make-up of the Indian Church at the present time shows that perhaps eighty-five per cent of its members, including some of those now furthest removed from Mass Movement conditions and in the most important positions, owe their origin as Christians to Mass Movements of an earlier period. But the most important consideration is that relating to the environment and social setting of the convert. An individualistic Christianity is an impossibility; the believer must have a Christian milieu, in which his faith and charity can expand. The provision of this milieu is one of the greatest problems. From every country and from almost every type of evangelistic work comes the same complaint: the existing churches are so unwelcoming, they do not provide the kind of atmosphere in which a convert can breathe; they are so stereotyped that for him the effort of adjustment is almost intolerable. With the Mass Movement convert it is otherwise; he brings with him his social environment. When a large group comes at one time to join the Church, it brings with it its whole pattern of relationships and social integrations. This is conditioned through and through by the non-Christian past; it needs to be completely worked over and recast in the light of Christ and His word; the Christianizing of an environment is often a more difficult task than the Christianizing of an in-

dividual or a family. But there is no stage at which the convert is *déraciné*. His roots are here; this is the soil in which he has grown up; if this soil can be refertilized by the word of Christ, he can continue to grow in it as a Christian with a natural and characteristic growth, and not as a mere imitation of his European guides.

These remarkable movements in a non-Christian country raise in an acute form many of the problems that will confront us in many different countries. But the root question of all is the relation of the working of the Spirit of God to mass activity and the psychology of the crowd. Why is it that men, apparently shut off in their own separate existence as individuals, become susceptible at levels below the purely rational to strains and movements of the Spirit, are taken out of themselves and swept on ways that seem to involve a complete change in their nature and activities? What we should call highly civilized peoples seem as subject to such movements as the very simple from whom our main illustration was taken. The movements in themselves seem to be almost neutral, capable of becoming an instrument in the hand of God, but capable also of being turned most neatly to serve the purposes of the devil. What was it in the mental configuration of England in the eighteenth century that made it so ready a field for the work of the Wesleys? How far is the Church right in trying to produce such widespread movements? Should it rather wait for them, and be ready to turn them to the purposes of the Kingdom of God when they manifest themselves? Or should the Church always be suspicious of the large movement, believing that the work of God is best done in the quiet of the individual spirit? These are questions which this study is written rather to evoke than to answer.

#### INDIVIDUAL SEEKERS

Let us now turn to a piece of evangelistic work as different as could be imagined in every respect. In China, one of the most familiar figures is the wandering monk. Among this fraternity are to be found as many varieties of character as among the wandering friars of the Middle Ages in Europe. A few are rogues, some are charlatans, but many are deeply religious men, with a real inner quest for light and peace. Rather more than twenty-five years ago, a Norwegian missionary was led to give



special attention to men of this class and to seek means to win them for Christ. The wandering monk is essentially an individualist. Even though he should spend part of his time in a monastery and accept the discipline of a closely corporate life, it is an individual quest for salvation which has driven him out to leave the intimacies of home and family for the endless way. His migratory life makes him inaccessible to all the ordinary methods of preaching the Gospel. After some years of experiment, the attempt to evangelize the monks took shape in the Christian Institute of Tao Fong Shan, "the Mountain from which the Christ Spirit is blowing". On a beautiful mountain near Hong-Kong has been built what may be called a Christian monastery. The Buddhist pilgrim who comes there will find nothing that jars upon him or seems unfamiliar; everything is in Chinese style; the buildings, the gardens, the whole rhythm and mode of life speak to him of that which is familiar. Yet there is a difference; there is no attempt to conceal the Christian element in that outwardly Chinese life. The emblem of the monastery is "the opened lotus flower, which in the east is the symbol of the soul of man that has opened itself to the influence of the divine and eternal"; but it is the lotus flower out of which arises the Cross, the divine answer to man's quest and his questionings. Here the wandering monk can come and stay as he will, think and meditate, question and read, and then move on as he will. Of the success of the method, to use a word which is never appropriate to any kind of Christian activity, there can be no doubt. Since the beginning of the work, more than 8,000 monks have passed through Tao Fong Shan; more than a hundred have found there the answer to their question and have been baptized. Several have been ordained to the ministry of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

This enterprise, and others like it, such as the many Christian Ashrams which have come into existence in recent years in India, raise urgently the question of the relations between the past of the seeker after Christ and his future. To become a Christian at all, he must become a new man in Christ. But how much does that require him to put off of what he had before he came to know Christ? Is there anything that can be retained, or must he start again afresh and acquire the whole of a new world in which to live? Was God at work in his old beliefs, or are they

<sup>3</sup> Information supplied by the Rev. K. L. Reichelt.

to be repudiated as wholly of the devil? Is his new faith in Christ to be regarded in some way as a development from or as the perfection of his old? Or is it a new and foreign power which condemns the old and shows up its worthlessness? These are questions that have perplexed the Church all through the centuries. If any finally satisfactory answer could be given, it is probable that it would have been given ere now and would have been universally accepted. As it is, opinion tends to swing from point to point. Generally speaking, the tendency of converts themselves is to take a very severe view of their own past; others believe that in Christ, old things are not abolished but are taken up into the new life and transformed, just as in the new man in Christ, the old man is not abolished, but is still visibly present, and not merely as the legacy of sin.

This second point of view is always in danger of syncretism, through allowing the old to determine the content or at least the shape of the new. The Cross may be shown arising out of the lotus; but if by any chance the lotus should determine the form of the Cross, then what would be presented would be not the Christian Gospel, but some hybrid, with no real power in it to save. From a very early date in the history of the Church, we can see this process at work. All the Gnostic sects arose from the attempt to reshape the Christian Gospel according to the presuppositions of the Hellenistic world; the Church which was successful in expelling Gnosticism was not so successful in putting the contribution of Greek thought in its right place in subjection to the Word of God. The success of Tao Fong Shan in avoiding this type of syncretism seems to be due to its determination to keep the Word of God and His message as the measure and the rule of all things. It is His Word which determines how far use can be made of the Chinese tradition of beauty and an ordered life in order to make plain for the Chinese the way to Him; it is not the Chinese tradition which determines the form of the presentation of the Gospel to the Chinese.

This single illustration, again, raises deep problems, which recur in every attempt to win men for Christ. The heart of the problem is the relation between the old and the new, or to put it in other words, between sameness and difference. Is the Gospel to be presented to men as the thing essentially familiar, because they have always known it in their hearts already, and therefore appealing to them as the truth which leads to the home



long since known though only dimly discerned? Or is it to be presented as the absolutely new, the truth so paradoxical and startling as to call out Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum*, and to pass the sentence of condemnation on every human striving as misdirected and irrelevant?

#### EVANGELISM IN THE PARISH

We have first gone far afield, in order to set forth in the most challenging form possible some of the problems that come up whenever and wherever men try to present the Gospel. For the rest of our study, we shall be on more familiar ground, considering various ways in which men have tried to solve these basic problems, in countries which have had a long Christian history, and where the challenge is to restore to life a Gospel which has ceased to mean anything to most of those who are dimly familiar with it.

From a very early date, the unit of the organization of the Church has been the parish, the area within which a family of Christians lives. One of the most momentous steps in the development of the Church was the change from the assembly to the parish, from "the Church that is in thy house" to the area in which the Christian family lived. Once the principle of the parish has been established, as it has been to some extent even by those communions which believe most strongly in the "gathered Church"—the fellowship of believing people—the natural mission-field for the Christians of the parish is the non-Christian or non-believing element in its area. Even in so-called Christian countries, the actual state of the parish in all towns and in many rural areas is that it consists of a small nucleus of church-goers and a very much larger mass of the occasional conformists, the indifferent and the hostile. The natural activity of the Christian ought to be, and usually is not, that which is described by the expressive French word *rayonnement*. In the parish setting, evangelism ought not to be a matter of occasional special efforts, but a permanent element in all Church activities, and that for which the whole worshipping community recognizes that it is being trained. The evangelizing agent is not the ordained minister, but the whole Christian fellowship.

One Methodist Church in America has made a very successful experiment in parish evangelism. After a careful and business-

like survey of a given district, a team of Christian people was trained for individual visitation. During less than four years this Church recorded an addition of 1,043 new members, more than half of whom had been won by this special "lay" effort.<sup>4</sup>

The varieties of parish evangelism are very many. No method can be transplanted from one area to another, and great scope has to be allowed for individual gifts and enterprise. One leading minister has been able to build up a large congregation almost entirely on the basis of very careful preparation of couples coming to him desiring to be married, and by individual spiritual care of them after marriage. But in all such efforts, the principles set forth in the one example here described will be found essential—that the spearhead should be the witness of lay people, who have a word to say of what Christ has done for them, and that there should be a welcoming community into which the newcomer can be brought, and in which he will find it possible to live, to worship and to serve.

#### EVANGELISM IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

At the opposite extreme from the carefully systematized methods of American evangelism are the spontaneous movements which from time to time spring up among simple people, without the leadership of authority or the direction of specially gifted people. We are glad to have received from an Orthodox source a detailed account of the movement which grew up in Yugo-Slavia between the two wars. The ethos of this movement is so different from anything familiar in the Western churches that the brief extracts, to which we are limited by consideration of space, deserve the careful attention of all students of evangelism.<sup>5</sup>

"After World War I there emerged in the Balkans two religious movements; one in Greece and another in Serbia. In Greece it was called *Zoë* (Life), and in Serbia *Bogomolzee* (God Worshipers). They were the same in spirit but different in origin. The *Zoë* was founded upon the theophilosophy of a notable Greek thinker Makrakis, whereas the Serbian

<sup>4</sup> Information supplied by Professor E. G. Homrighausen.

<sup>5</sup> Information communicated by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Nicolai Velimirovic, of the Orthodox Church of Yugo-Slavia, now resident in America.



movement Bogomolzee sprang from the personal spiritual experiences of the common Serbian men and women during the awful years of war sufferings.

“ They were singing, those Bogomolzee, singing almost continually, not only at their meetings but also while working in the fields and in houses or travelling in trains or on foot. The worldly songs almost disappeared from among them; they sang spiritual hymns and psalms.

“ ‘ Sing, brothers, sing. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad. For we were blind and now we see. We have found the truth, and we know now whose children we are. We know our Saviour and the path of our salvation. Sing, brothers, sing.’

“ The hymns they sang were composed by themselves. But they circulated anonymously. Most of the hymns were published in either their monthly magazine *Missionary* or in separate booklets, but very rarely signed by the authors. There is a very great number of hymns and songs. If they all were published in book form, there would be several books as large as the present Hymnal Book of the Episcopal Church. Of course they are not all of literary value, but many are. Before that movement, we in our church did not have any Hymnal in popular tongue. This was a novelty which moved thousands of human hearts. Even the Moslem children in Bosnia used to sing them in the streets and fields.

“ External miracles caused conversion, repentance, thanksgiving, heart rejoicing and singing. Yea, the miracles produced a fundamental change of the inner man, of the ‘ hidden man of the heart ’.

“ This happened to many of the Bogomolzee and Zoësts during and after War I. Before their striking experiences they were—as they afterwards publicly confessed—either indifferent to religion or lukewarm or even hostile to it. The practical consequence of each of these attitudes was the immoral conduct. Their public confessions, together with their changed life, drew to the Movement many of those who listened but did not have a spiritual experience of their own.

“ Similar cases in war and peace time are innumerable. But there were also cases witnessed by crowds of people. In one single monastery of St. Naum on the shore of Ochrida Lake,

the records were published for three years. Each year showed between 130 to 163 healing cases, some of extreme gravity like lunacy, paralysis, skin disease, epilepsy and others. Personally, I was an eyewitness of several such cases. Here is a very strange instance. A young man, lean and emaciated, was brought, hands bound with a rope. At the door of the church the demoniac became suddenly very violent. He broke the rope like a straw and attacked six men who tried to bind him again. With a fury he knocked them down, and they retreated scared, and left him alone. I was wondering about such a giant's strength in such a frail creature. After a month of continual prayers for him, he became perfectly sane and reasonable, but very weak and exhausted. I asked him whether he remembered what he had done in the monastery, and he answered: 'I remember everything. I am sorry but it was not I who offended and hurt the people. I tried to speak politely but somebody in me stopped me and he spoke slandering words. I tried to cross myself because I knew I was in St. Naum, but he stiffened my right hand. Not I, but he knocked the six by my hands, and my hands pained me terribly. I was his plaything. When I wanted to speak as a man he barked through my mouth like a dog.' "

Our Orthodox Church teaches that miracles mean God's intervention in human life and affairs. If God's interventions are denied, then our prayers to God are of no avail. To believe in God, however, and not to pray to Him means to believe in an *unemployed* God who uninterestedly and powerlessly is looking from heavenly galleries down to all miseries of men. If God were an unemployed God, He would not be a living and loving God but an idol. On the other hand, to pray to God means nothing else but to expect His intervention, His miracles, be it directly or indirectly. It is certainly a paradox to deny God's miracles and yet to say the Lord's Prayer as some of the Church's antagonists do. For in that prayer we are asking for bread, forgiveness, deliverance from evil. That is to say, we are asking God's miracles.

"Our new spiritual movement added nothing to our old theology. Its contribution to the Church, however, has been remarkable in three points:



1. In a great accumulation of individual spiritual experiences in harmony with age-long Christian experiences, with accentuated moral obligations;
2. In creating a huge religious poetry as a moving expression of our faith.
3. In accentuating especially the dogma of God's Providence, in its deepest and largest sense.

“A Russian ‘starez’ gave us an additional counsel:

“Turn neither to the right nor to the left, as the Lord said to Joshua.”

This advice is very precious, especially for our times when some Christian theologians and priests have been confusing their flock by introducing the political terms—rightists and leftists—into the Church and religion. This division has nothing to do with Christ's revelation. There are no leftists and rightists in our Lord's teachings. For it is more exact than mathematics. Therefore, the Orthodox Church, even in the countries ruled by the extreme leftists, has gone not an inch away from the inherited Faith and Order and Liturgics, neither to the left nor to the right.

“Our brothers in the movement eagerly read the Revelation and whisperingly conversed about the last-time mysteries.

“The reading of Christ's eschatologic sermons and of the Book of Revelation produced in human souls a wholesome fear. Among the Bogomolzee that was not fear of what is to come, but the fear for one's soul. It was indeed purifying fear of God. But the joy of the final victory of the Lamb over the beasts was the top feeling. They sang many hymns regarding Christ's victory over the beasts and Christ's second coming in glory.

*Behold the Lord is coming with His host  
Let His enemies tremble and not boast,  
The earth is quaking, the stars in flight,  
Hail, brothers, the Lamb victorious  
Meet your Bridegroom at midnight.”*

## REVIVAL MASS MEETINGS

At an earlier period of evangelistic enterprise, the great and classic method was the campaign of large meetings, held for a number of days together by some outstanding evangelist. There are men still living who can remember the great days of Moody and Sankey, and the extraordinary and permanent results brought about by their work in many churches and many lives. It is the common view that the day of such campaigns is past. Certainly the spiritual atmosphere has greatly changed from what it was in the days of Moody. The task of the evangelist was to get his hearers to take seriously the things which they half-heartedly believed, and to assure them that there was in Christ the power to live the kind of life which their own conscience assured them to be right. Now all that has changed. The spiritual capital of the West has been dwindling at an alarming rate. Although a recent Gallup poll revealed that ninety per cent of the Americans questioned returned an affirmative answer to the question whether they believed in God, for the most part ignorance of the Christian Faith and what it demands, relativity in morals, the general scepticism which questions whether anything can be truly known unless it can be made the object of scientific investigation, have made the task of the Christian evangelist much more difficult. But if more difficult, surely much more interesting, since he is dealing with questioning minds, and finds himself not merely challenged to give of his best, but has the assurance that, if he is successful, he will be adding to the Church those who can give an independent witness of greater value than that of the merely acquiescent believers of earlier times.

But evidence from many countries shows that the day of the mission campaign and the mass meeting is by no means over.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the reports that have come in is that concerning the great series of public meetings organized by French Protestants in the days following the liberation in 1945. Protestants in France, as one of their own reporters frankly remarks, have suffered from a minority complex since the days when Henry IV forbade Protestant worship in Paris, and since for a hundred and fifty years Louis XIV and his successors harried them with fire and sword. So it was a gesture of no small importance when the small Gouvieux team,



alone and without any support except that of prayer, decided to hire the Wagram Hall in Paris for the public proclamation of the Gospel. This great meeting of 5,000 auditors was followed up by similar great gatherings in other parts of Paris. Never in the history of French Protestantism have such manifestations of enthusiasm been seen. Questioned as to the actual value of such gatherings, our reporter retorts: "Eh quoi? Comptera-t-on pour rien d'avoir placardé dans tout Paris, à milliers d'exemplaires, le nom du Christ et l'appel à lire son évangile?"<sup>6</sup>

France is not alone among the Latin countries in having had experience of such mass evangelism. In Italy, the position of the small Protestant communities, the largest of which is the historic Waldensian Church, is more difficult by far than that of the Protestant churches in France. Yet here, too, the spirit of courageous witness has been at work. Preachers of those churches have ventured out into the open air, have hired cinemas and other public halls for meeting with no other object than the straightforward preaching of the Gospel. And to their surprise they have found crowded audiences and a ready hearing. The Roman Church, too, has launched its great campaigns of evangelism, with many signs of success. As one of our informants told us, "Italy is a religious country. Secularism has not penetrated the soul of the people as it has in France. Italians, even when they are anti-clerical, are not anti-religious." In the main this description seems to be true.<sup>7</sup>

Not unnaturally America seems to be the country in which the large-scale campaign still seems most to prosper. In spite of all that has been done between the wars by the more unwise, commercially minded, even immoral promoters, to discredit this type of evangelism, it still flourishes and claims its great successes. That which has acquired the widest publicity is the "Youth for Christ" Movement. This started with Saturday night meetings for youth in New York; but it quickly spread across the continent and even beyond the limits of the United States. "Its programme consists of mass meetings on Saturday nights, in which Gospel singing periods, testimonies, special musical presentations and a Gospel message are presented in the style of a radio broadcast conducted by a master of ceremonies." Its

<sup>6</sup> *Enquêtes sur les Valeurs spirituelles à Paris*: Editions Oberlin, Strasbourg 1947, ff. 196-7.

<sup>7</sup> Information communicated by the Rev. P. Eynard, T. Vinay and C. Brutsch.

theology is conservative, and its piety "pietistic". Even the critics of the movement readily admit that its leaders are actuated by a genuine desire to win the young for Christ and to link them up with the work and worship of the regular churches. "This movement seems to be getting a response from both youth and adults because it presents Christian experience as something so meaningful that men are willing to express concern and joy over it. There are many who believe that it secures its following because the churches have somehow failed to minister to the basic emotional needs of youth in a spiritual way." The operative word in this statement is joy.<sup>8</sup> We have received a personal testimony from one who received through the work of Youth for Christ in Holland the vital experience of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, that it was the unmistakable joy of the leaders and of those taking part in the meetings which made real what had previously been only intellectually known. By contrast, the worship and life of the churches seemed solemn, and to lack that personal appeal without which youth cannot easily be won.

Movements not dissimilar to Youth for Christ have been operating in England and Ireland, and filling some of the largest halls in the country. All these movements, however they may differ in detail, seem to be marked by the same strength and weakness. Those who have professed the experience of conversion at such gatherings tend to embrace a sect-type of Christianity without a strong sense of social responsibility. Inevitably the organizers of the meetings have not themselves a strong programme of follow-up; they would say, perhaps, that this was not their business, and that it was left to the local churches to do that part of the work; if the local churches fail to corral the sheep expertly driven towards them, who is to blame for that? To this the local churches might answer that, if young people are taken by an emotional experience out of the natural fellowship in which they ought to be growing, it becomes all the more difficult to make them at home again after the breach of continuity.

The most serious question, however, has reference to those who attend these great meetings. From what class are they drawn? Exact statistical information cannot be obtained; but the impression obtained by those who have gone into the matter most fully is that usually ninety per cent of those present are

<sup>8</sup> Information communicated by Prof. E. G. Homrighausen.



already at least occasional attenders at some Christian place of worship, and that the majority are in fairly close touch with some Church and its organizations. This is not necessarily a condemnation of such movements. Many acquiescent church members need just such a stimulus to bring their Christian life out of the chrysalis stage into active life. And, if no more than ten per cent of those present belong to the alienated class, to have got even so many together under the sound of the Gospel is by no means a contemptible achievement. It is important, however, that neither those responsible for the organization of the campaign nor the responsible leaders of the churches should be deluded by imagining that what is happening is different from what in reality it is.

#### UNIVERSITY MISSIONS

Before leaving the subject of campaigns and large-scale movements, some space may be spared for two movements of more than marginal importance, touching a class of person rather less closely associated with the Church than those reached by Youth for Christ and similar organizations.

The practice of holding University Missions has shown considerable revival both in America and in England. The older generation of Christian leaders can remember the great campaigns of the last years of the nineteenth century, when the life of whole universities was shaken and hundreds of lives were touched. A feeling had grown up that the day of such efforts had passed, and that, if such missions were held, the results would be, in the slightly cynical but not untruthful remark of an exceptionally acute observer, that the benches "would be occupied by the godly, who had come to set a good example to the ungodly who were not there". The experience of recent years has shown clearly that there is still a place for University campaigns well prepared and rightly led, and that they will have their influence not only on the students, but also on members of the staff.

We may take as an example the remarkable Mission to Oxford University in February 1947. This was preceded by a very long campaign of preparation, during which Christian groups were formed in all the colleges, and trained in the work of prayer and witness. The chief missionary was supported by twenty assistant

missioners, men and women, who lived in the colleges and were available the whole time for personal work among the students. Evening meetings were held every evening for a week, not, as had been customary, in a church, but in the Sheldonian Theatre, the official meeting-place of the University. Expectation was far exceeded. The theatre was well filled each night, more than filled for the concluding meeting. The hearers included many students who had previously had no connection with any religious organization. During the week, the Mission was the main subject of conversation in the University. All emotional appeal was rigidly excluded, yet throughout the week there was a growing feeling of intensity and expectancy. Two features in the Mission were specially notable. First, important as were the evening meetings, the work of the chief missionary proved to be of secondary importance compared with that of the assistant missionaries in smaller groups, college meetings and personal work. Secondly, at the end of the week of meetings, there was not, as there usually is after such special efforts, a feeling of exhaustion and collapse. The Christian groups, reinforced in many cases by new members, set themselves quietly and practically to the task of making the University more Christian. Nine months later, a well-placed observer was able to write: "I feel that for the first time in at least ten or twelve years, the tide is very strongly with us."<sup>9</sup> All who were in any way associated with the Mission were agreed that its remarkable success was due, under God, to the long period of careful preparation, and to the fact that the Mission was a corporate enterprise of almost all the Christian forces in Oxford.

#### THE MORAL REARMAMENT MOVEMENT

The second movement which deserves consideration is that which now calls itself Moral Rearmament, but it is still frequently known by its earlier name, the Oxford Group Movement. Moral Rearmament has been the object on one side of extravagant adulation, on the other of unusually venomous criticism. It is therefore a little difficult to assess its real place in the Christian scene at the present time. The movement stands for the direct application of the absolute standards of the Gospel to practical daily life. It believes in the direct guidance

<sup>9</sup> See Supplement to *Christian News Letter*, June 1947.



of God as available at all times to every believer. For years it has worked on the method of holding house-parties, at which, by the exchange of experiences and by a spirit of intimate, perhaps it is not unfair to say hearty, fellowship, the new-comer is drawn into the realities of Christian life. The movement has set itself to reach a class of wealthy and worldly people, whom the ordinary churches had largely failed to touch, and may therefore justly claim to have broken new ground in the evangelistic field. In recent years M.R.A. has also done important work in industrial centres.

The criticisms directed against the movement are many and well known. Some have felt that its financial methods might be improved by a little more openness. Others find disturbing its slightly childish methods of publicity, and its delight in the exploitation of famous or well-known names. More serious is the objection that the seeking of guidance, as practised by the groups, may easily claim the sanction of the Holy Spirit for the promptings of autosuggestion. The constant, and unanalysed, use of the word democracy suggests the uncomfortable and slightly ludicrous picture of a line-up of the Oxford Group with the Pope and American big business on the anti-communist front. Those who know the movement from within, however, claim that "Moral Rearmament raises the vital question of the ideological basis of true democracy". Its leaders lay stress on the need for a spiritual basis of democracy—in other words, that God should be recognized as the Supreme Authority and Creative Power in the daily life of mankind.

But when the worst has been said, the movement may claim to have rendered signal services to the Christian cause in the depressed period between the wars. A considerable number of those who are now convinced Christians owe to the Group their first contact with the Christian Faith as a live and challenging force. Many, who had been Christian for years, and not all of whom have remained within the circle of the movement, will bear witness that through their contact with the Groups they were delivered from complacencies and inhibitions which were hindering their Christian usefulness. No one can spend a day at a Moral Rearmament House Party without experiencing the charm of an exuberant and sometimes naïve cheerfulness and friendliness. The comment of a German visitor, after his first experience of the fellowship, was, "These people really think

it is possible for something to happen," no bad thing in a world where the Church is perhaps a little too much given to bewailing its lost opportunities and to confessing its sins in public. If the cheerful expectation of the Groups that the Kingdom of God is just round the corner is eighty per cent due to a youthful zest for life as yet unbroken on its roughnesses, it is possible that the other twenty per cent draws its strength from a genuine and unbreakable conviction of the reality of the miraculous working of God in the drab and disheartening twentieth century.

#### THE NEED FOR FELLOWSHIP IN EVANGELISM

In all the activities so far described, there is an element, psychologically important, to which we shall have occasion to refer again. Modern man, at least in the industrial West, is oppressed by a sense of loneliness and pettiness. Torn up from many of his natural roots, and not feeling intensely that there is any place where he belongs, he is seeking, albeit subconsciously, for fellowship. Conscious of his smallness, as an atom in a mass society, he desires to compensate for that smallness by belonging to something great. In war-time, this compensation is for many achieved by the anonymity of uniform, by the spirit of the regiment or ship and by a sense of the greatness of the cause. In peace-time, the old irksome sense of triviality sets in again. It is clear that some forms of Christian evangelism on a large scale owe their success to their appeal to just these two needs of men. This is not to disparage them. The needs were planted there by God, as a part of the natural inheritance of man. They cannot find their full satisfaction anywhere except in the family and the city of God. Our concern is only that it should be the family and city of God in which the satisfaction is offered, and not in some transitory and ephemeral home of the emotions.

#### RELIGIOUS FILMS

As we pass further away from the central nucleus of regular church membership, the problem of the evangelistic approach to those who stand aloof from the Church becomes more difficult. Such people will not ordinarily come to church, or to a religious meeting. How then are they to be reached?

The development of the modern techniques of the radio and



the film have opened up possibilities of which the churches have been rather slow to see the significance. It may be said that people who have no interest in religion will not listen to a religious broadcast, and will not go to see a religious film. The facts are against this supposition. Expert collection of evidence shows that in countries which have regular religious broadcasts, an astonishing number of non-church-goers do listen to them, many casually, some of set purpose; and that if a religious film is good enough, millions of people will flock to see it.

The Roman Catholic Church has been very fortunate in the appearance in quick succession of four films of considerable merit and widespread popularity—*Going My Way*, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, *The Song of Bernadette* and *The Keys of the Kingdom*, in each of which religion in its Roman Catholic form has been presented as interesting, attractive and even exciting. It must not be supposed that others have been idle in the matter. Religious and biblical films are being produced, and there has been a steady rise in the technical quality of the films produced. But this enterprise is still in its infancy, and time will be required before religious films can compete on the grounds of excellence and interest with the best productions of the secular world. This matter is of urgent importance, since in the modern world the tendency is for man to learn through eye and ear together, and to be far less impressed by what touches the ear alone than by what appeals to several senses simultaneously.

#### RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING

On the air the situation differs very much in different countries. In England, the British Broadcasting Corporation, a Government-sponsored organization, allocates a considerable amount of air-time each week, on several distinct programmes, to religious services, lectures and discussions. Great care is taken to make sure that all the main denominations have a share in the time allotted, and that speakers representative of many different points of view are chosen. Events which combine religious and national significance, such as the Coronation of the King, are usually broadcast. Complaints have been heard from various quarters that the B.B.C. tends to be rather colourless. There may in the past have been just grounds for this complaint. But

the religious department of the B.B.C. is launching out on a more adventurous programme, adapting its messages to the needs of different types of hearers, and giving opportunity for frank discussion on the air between Christians and non-Christians. It is hard to measure the value of radio-evangelism in England. But the diffused effects of the religious programmes on literally millions of listeners are by no means negligible as a factor in the evangelistic situation.

Very different is the picture in the United States. Here responsibility for the proclamation of the Gospel over the air is shared by churches, or federations of churches, with individuals who feel a special vocation to this ministry and sponsor their own programmes.

One of the largest and most influential agencies is the National Radio Religious Commission of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The Council sponsors seventeen weekly broadcasts on the three great religious networks, apart from broadcasting minute prayers for the United Nations, special Holy Week services and other features. These programmes, being sponsored by a joint organization, have no denominational emphasis, and therefore according to one witness "are instructive and pastoral in nature, but not arresting and demanding in their claims". Precise evidence as to the extent to which they are listened to, and as to the effect produced by them on their hearers, are not in the nature of the case available. Yet it is noteworthy that not long ago 14,000 copies of a single sermon were distributed to listeners who had asked for them.

We have received somewhat detailed information of an outstanding individual effort, in which a preacher who is also an able theologian preaches every Sunday, and reaches an audience which is computed to reach the staggering figure of fifteen millions in many lands. Twenty-five thousand letters reaching his office every week are some measure of the interest aroused. These sermons are definitely evangelistic; they present to the hearers the Christ of the Scriptures and demand a personal response. The following statement, though rhetorically expressed, is an indication of the enormous possibilities of the radio as a means of mass evangelism: "Lighthouse-keepers . . . rangers in lonely forest lands . . . inmates of hospitals and prisons . . . head-hunters in New Guinea . . . West Indians



. . . Indians near the isthmus of Panama . . . soldiers in the Aleutians . . . shipyard workers in California and down in Baltimore . . . all tell how they found Jesus as Saviour as a result of this vast, worldwide broadcast every Sunday morning."<sup>10</sup>

In the lands of the younger churches, the use of radio as a means of evangelization is scarcely as yet in its beginnings. Yet there are striking exceptions. The ordinary observer, if asked to put his finger on that spot on the map of the inhabited world where we should be most unlikely to find a missionary radio station, might well point to the top of the Andes Mountains in South America. But it is precisely there that one of the most remarkable modern missionary enterprises is to be found. Tune it on the right wave-length, and at almost any hour of the day or night you may find yourself listening to the Voice of the Andes from Quito in the Republic of Ecuador. When the pioneers chose this location for their Gospel radio station, they did not know that a place on the Ecuador 10,000 feet above sea-level was about the most perfect place in the world from which to secure good and clear transmission.

The "Voice of the Andes" was initiated by North American enterprise. Its theology is what would ordinarily be called fundamentalist. But its promoters were wise enough to realize the need of a right identification with the life of the country and of the continent in which they had chosen to work. Those who are not familiar with the Latin-American point of view tend to forget the almost Messianic self-consciousness of the Latin-American peoples, their conviction of the superiority of their culture to that represented by the United States, and their belief that South America is the continent of the future. The "Voice of the Andes", recognizing all these factors, set itself from the start to be not a selling agency for a foreign and in many ways uncongenial culture, but the expression of an existing culture which needs to be criticized and deepened by a new apprehension of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who work for this enterprise do so from profound conviction of the truth of its central religious message. They are a team of evangelists, regarding the non-religious part of their programmes not as bait, or as marginal to the central issue, but as part of the total evangelistic programme. The station now broadcasts in seventeen languages. Its programmes are heard very widely throughout

<sup>10</sup> Information communicated by the Rev. E. G. Homrighausen.

the world, and letters from many countries give evidence both of its technical efficiency and of the effect of the words spoken over the air.<sup>11</sup>

In many parts of the world, the development of religious broadcasting presents what appear at present to be insuperable difficulties. Yet it is clear that there is no point at which the combined resources of the churches can be brought to bear more profitably than this. It has been suggested, for example, that a strongly equipped radio-station somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Iron Curtain, and broadcasting in the languages of all the peoples behind the curtain, would be one of the few means available to the churches for surmounting that division between East and West in Europe, which seems day by day to be becoming more absolute. Another proposal is for the establishment of such a station in a position from which the Gospel could be broadcast to all the countries of South-East Asia.

#### RELIGION IN GERMAN SCHOOLS

One of the greatest evangelistic opportunities of the churches is religious instruction in schools, in countries where something of the Christian tradition in national life has been retained. There is here a great field for study. Here we can do no more than give an indication of the way in which, in certain circumstances, Christian teaching in schools can be used as a means for making contact with almost wholly de-Christianized sections of the population.

Under the present régime in Berlin, religious teaching can be given in the schools to children whose parents desire it, but this is wholly the responsibility of the churches, and not of the education department or of the controlling authorities. It is the business of the churches to find, train and pay those who will give religious teaching, the conditions under which they do so being controlled and guaranteed by the secular authorities, but without interference with the actual religious teaching given. The churches at once organized a great campaign to secure both the teachers and the scholars; provision had to be made for about 300,000 children, and for each child requiring religious instruction a written application from a parent or guardian was needed.

An active campaign was set in motion to secure the applica-

<sup>11</sup> See Clarence W. Jones: *Radio, the New Missionary*, Chicago, 1946.



tions. Announcements were made from the pulpits in churches. For a fortnight, large posters were displayed in Berlin. Notices appeared in the papers. In spite of all this effort, in some quarters the returns were very few. Personal visits to parents were found to be essential, and these, when tactfully undertaken, proved to be most efficacious. One teacher has recorded her experience as follows: The holidays were devoted to visits to the homes of 239 children, all of the working class, whose names and addresses she had obtained. In almost every case, the reception was courteous. Some parents replied: "Give the children something to eat, and don't bother us about teaching them about God." Others agreed that religious instruction is a good thing for children as part of a general education. As a result of 505 personal visits, in the course of which three families could not be seen in spite of five separate visits to each house, eighty-five per cent of the children were provided with the necessary applications and were added to the classes for religious instruction in their schools. It happens that this was also the proportion for the whole of Berlin. In some wards, even those most strongly influenced by communism, the proportion of children for whom application was made reached as high as ninety-five per cent. In the majority of cases, the parents proved to be largely or wholly alienated from the Church, but did not wish to be considered pagans; for the Church as an institution they had little good to say; of religion as a factor in the life of men they were not unappreciative.

Of the results of this personal contact with homes and of the religious instruction provided for the children, it is too early as yet to speak. It is possible already to indicate the immense possibilities of contact with family life on this level, as a means of building a bridge over the chasm which, not only in Berlin but in almost all the great cities of the industrial west, divides the Church from the places where men and women really live.<sup>12</sup>

#### EVANGELISM IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE

At the opposite extreme from these great endeavours at mass approach, we have received most encouraging reports of what is beginning to be known as the professional approach, the attempt to make contact with men and women more or less dissociated

<sup>12</sup> Information communicated by Pastor Lökies, Berlin.

from traditional and organized religion, at the level of their professional life and occupation, helping them to understand the meaning of the Christian Faith by setting it forth to them in its relevance to man in his daily life and in the place where he works.

One notably successful effort of this kind is reported from the North of England. It brought together in conference about two dozen men from four large factories each employing 2,000 workers. Those concerned included representatives of management, office staff, shop stewards, foremen and younger men who were possible future leaders in some capacity. The aim was "to get first-class lecturers to describe what the Christian Faith and life actually is, to tell the story of Christ through the ages and suggest the application of Christianity to industrial and other spheres of life". The Conference came into being only after long and thorough discussion with both managements and men; in some cases the members of the Conference were actually chosen by the workers as their own representatives. The programme appears to have manifested that peculiar English combination of sobriety, allusiveness and fun and games, which is so perplexing to those not born between Land's End and John o' Groats. Those attending the Conference were asked to bring towel, soap and ration book, and an open mind. After each lecture discussion was fast and furious, but "the interesting thing was that after the first night their minds were far less on industry than on their intense desire to find out what this Christianity was about". Those who had been present went back to their work charged with the responsibility of telling their mates all about what had been going on. Letters received from them were both moving and illuminating. "In the workshop it's an easy and pleasant job to discuss the conference with its many absorbing points: the majority of the chaps want to know about something and appear interested. The actual lessons I have learned, however, will be much more difficult to explain. You see, the men have not the atmosphere in a factory in which to think of such things." . . . "You anticipated our having to stand up to a mixed reception and I assure you I got it. We are a pretty mixed lot in the factory as you can guess, and believe me some of them haven't made life a bed of roses this last week or two, but the more taunts and criticism I received the more determined I became to stick to my guns. Mind you, many of the



chaps were genuinely interested, and their appreciation has helped considerably in keeping me to my resolution."<sup>13</sup>

The United States provides fascinating information of an experiment still in its early stages of development, but so significant as to challenge the closest attention. Here the approach was not to the industrialist and the worker, but to the professional man in the narrower sense. Of those who found spiritual help in the groups now to be described, all were graduates, some teachers, others lawyers or business men and women. One who was intimately connected with the work states modestly that "it is what any evangelical with some imagination would do if groups asked him to do it"; the information is offered, however, with the caution that though it may serve as a challenge, it will not provide a model. "I have seen failure after failure to use the model. Chiefly I think because most of us have not learned to listen to the people long enough to be able to speak to them, and still think there is some way to speak to them *en masse*. There isn't yet, that is for people in the middle classes. They are all over the lot and must be spoken to as they wander around, not as being in one place all the time."

These groups started from a liberal and humanistic attitude and were deeply interested in social justice. Three-quarters were originally antagonistic to any form of classical and institutional Christianity. Beginning with discussion on current subjects, the members found themselves driven back to basic study, especially of Christian doctrine. After a time, two groups fused to set up a Christian University for laymen, which met in the basement of a residence, with Seminary Professors as lecturers and long discussions after lectures. The course started with Adam (not Smith, the one in the Bible), and ended with Archbishop Temple, much time being given to the classical Christian writers, St. Paul, Augustine, Calvin and Luther. Results were so satisfactory that the course has now been regularized and is on the way to becoming permanent. The standard of work expected is indicated by the note that some of these laymen had read in the course of their studies the second volume of Dr. Niebuhr's Gifford Lectures, Cochrane's *Christianity and Classical Culture* and the one-volume abridgement of Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*.

Of all the results of this experiment, the most important from

<sup>13</sup> Information communicated by the Rt. Rev. the Lord Bishop of Woolwich.

the point of view of this study is the changed relationship of the members of the groups to the organized Church. After some years of work, fifty per cent of those attending the groups were regular in attendance at church services, many of them taking responsibility for parish activities, and those who had themselves become convinced Christians were fired with the missionary spirit, and constantly bringing others within the charmed circle of the groups.<sup>14</sup>

It is obvious that such methods cannot be used, except where there is a group of educated lay people, anxious for knowledge and willing to take trouble to obtain it. But it is possible that the failure of the Church to hold the laity has been due in part to the fact that it has asked too little of them. Men who earn their living in the cut-throat atmosphere of industrial life must be alert and have their wits about them. They take infinite trouble over the perfection of a technical process. It may be that they are much more ready than is often supposed by the clergy to take the same sort of trouble in their quest for religion. The astonishing increase in many countries in the demand for first-rate music is perhaps an indication of a thirst for reality that will see its way to satisfaction, when confronted with first-rate religion for sale at top prices only.

Post-war Germany has been the scene of similar enterprises, with the characteristic differences to be expected with so different a climate and background. Worse almost than any crime of the Nazis against the lives and bodies of men was their systematic and largely successful attempt to destroy the spiritual and cultural bases on which European man has built his life for more than a thousand years. Consequently, after the Nazi *débâcle*, an immense number of men have found themselves inwardly torn in pieces, without principles, without guiding lights, without intellectual or spiritual security. The situation in Germany is different from that in other countries, since it has come about not only through the slow disintegration of the Christian idea, but by a violent breach of continuity. For the traditional ideas of the *corpus Christianum* has been forcibly substituted a different set of ideas, based on contemporary valuations and not on any abiding principles. With the collapse of these ideas, those subjected to their influence have found themselves in a state of terrible mental confusion, in which despair is one of the

<sup>14</sup> Information communicated by the Rev. Robert S. Bilheimer.



strongest ingredients; and for them the way back to Christian conceptions may be long and doubly arduous. It has been the task of the Evangelische Akademie at Bad Boll in Württemberg, and other homes of the spirit which have sprung up to extend its work elsewhere, to gather together thoughtful men of many types, and to help them to think through their problems honestly and in the light of the word of God. Bad Boll has entertained lawyers and doctors, leaders in industry and workers, farmers, poets, artists, journalists, civil servants, churchmen and teachers.

For all, the problem is in its main lines the same. They have lost their way and have to be helped to find it.

The leaders of the Akademie have found that any merely intellectual discussion soon becomes wearisome to the non-Christians. The threefold emphasis of the Akademie is on Christian teaching, exposition of the Bible, and living testimony from within the life of the Church. Many of those who have attended the sessions have gone away with a renewed Christian conviction. But what is to become of them when they go home? If they find an unwelcoming Church, a pietistic atmosphere so intent on the affairs of the world to come as to be unaware of the urgent pressure of the affairs of this world, speaking a remote and unfamiliar language, how are they there to find a spiritual home? We are reminded yet again, not merely that all evangelistic work must be done in closest contact with the life of the Church, but that no evangelistic work can ultimately be successful until the Church itself is both the home of the saints and also the evangelizing body.<sup>15</sup>

At a distance from the centre of ordinary church life, little greater than that of the Evangelische Akademie, we may place such an enterprise as St. Michael's House, Hamburg. It requires very little imagination to realize the difficulties involved in the running of such a home by an English priest in the British occupied zone of Germany. The natural suspicions are so strong as to raise initially the question whether any useful work at all can be done under such conditions. The only answer is that the experiment has worked. For more than a year, very carefully selected representatives of different levels of society in Germany have been brought together for courses at St. Michael's House. The Christian Faith has been set before them in an atmosphere of fellowship, and in a way which to many of them has proved

<sup>15</sup> Information communicated by Dr. Eberhard Müller.

entirely fresh. The old presentation, and the biblical language used by some of those who have spoken to them, have left them entirely unmoved; but the presentation of the Gospel as a way of life relevant to every concern of man, including his social problems, his art, his recreations, has given to many a sense that here is something which at least deserves investigation. Testimony has been borne by a most distinguished German visitor to the astonishing atmosphere of fellowship which he found in the House. Among those who have attended courses have been some who not merely were not Christians, but whose minds had been deliberately and systematically de-Christianized by special Nazi training. Even among these, some have become ardent Christians, and even helpers in the work of the House. Many others have found a home in their local churches. The secret of the work has been the life in common. After all, it was by living with the disciples that our Lord educated them; in the fellowship of a life lived out in mutual trust and service, what were once no more than intellectual categories come to life, and are seen as the revelation of the love of God.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE LOST COMMUNITY

So far we have been writing mostly about work among those who, though now alienated from the Church, have at one time or another had some connection with it, and retain at least some memory of the Christian Faith. But beyond this circle, there is another circle, and a very wide one, of those who are completely alienated from Christian ideas and traditions, and constitute a mission field in the strict sense of the term. It is among the "proletariat" of the great cities of the West that most representatives of this class are to be found; but there are countries in which the *élite* is more pagan than the masses.

What is to be done about these spirits, which will not come when you do call for them? Of what spiritual needs, if any, are they still conscious? What access can the Church find to the lost sheep, which shows no marked consciousness that it is lost?

From all quarters comes the cry that the great evil wrought by industrialization is the destruction of community. Many of those most concerned about the welfare of the Church put the

<sup>16</sup> Information communicated by the Rev. S. Goodchild and others.



recovery of community in the very foreground of the evangelistic plan.

#### THE IONA COMMUNITY

Best known of all these modern communities is that founded in 1938 on the island of Iona in Scotland, from which in the sixth century Saint Columba carried the Gospel to the mainland. To this we can give only a little space, not because it is unimportant, but because it is already well known and information about it is available in many places.

The founder, a leading minister of the Church of Scotland, was moved by three considerations—deeply experienced and felt—that the Church has almost entirely lost its hold on the working classes, that it has done so because its ministers speak to that class from outside, and that the breach can be healed only as those who are to be ministers of the Gospel learn to live and work with working people. Members of the community, consisting half of theological students or young ministers, and half of artisans, spend the summer months on Iona, leading a life of discipline and prayer, and engaged in the rebuilding of the ruined medieval abbey. In the winter they return to their ordinary work. The simple rule of the community lays stress on three points—prayer, the use of time and the use of money. There can be no question, as with a regular community, of common possession of goods; but each member is expected to accept a standard rate of expenditure, to keep careful accounts and to justify any personal expenditure beyond the generally accepted rate.

During the winter months, the work of the community spreads out in many directions in the parishes. One of its most important activities is the Community Home in Glasgow. Here the Christian Faith is taught, not as an intellectual abstraction, but as something which is related to man in society. The young people are taught to think politically, as responsible members of a society, and industrially, as workers with others in great enterprises. They are shown that, as children of God, they have rights of which perhaps previously they were unaware, and that a new order in industry can be brought into being, if employers and workers together can see their tasks as part of their Christian obedience to God.

At one burning point, Iona is tackling the problem of con-

munication. It is becoming a commonplace among evangelists that those of the younger generation are less susceptible than their fathers to the influence of the spoken word. This raises the question whether the Church has not to learn again from its own experience in the Middle Ages, and to use the drama far more than it has done for centuries as a means for imparting a religious truth. What is important in the Iona experiment is that the young people interested do not act plays written by other people for their benefit, they write and act their own plays out of the heart of their own conviction and experience. The same method is followed by the group called "Religion through Drama". Experience has confirmed the initial conviction that men are most willing to take the trouble to explore the meaning of the faith, when they want to do something and to express something.<sup>17</sup>

#### CIMADE

"Cimade's" greatest originality is the way in which it was born and grew as an emergency organization with no definite method or limits and just one aim: to bring the Gospel to the most stricken among the victims of the war.

In the autumn of 1939 the five Protestant Youth Movements of France decided to do something together for the evacuees from the East of the country dispersed in the West, and the first teams set at work during the winter. War events put an end to this work in May 1940.

In the autumn of that same year terrible rumours began to spread about the conditions of the concentration camp of Gurs, where 15,000 to 20,000 Jews and foreigners lived crowded together in barracks surrounded by barbed wire. Cimade had no money, only good will and a great determination that something had to be done. Madeleine Barot, after weeks of daily struggle with the director of the camp, got permission to occupy one of the barracks. Two members of the Cimade settled within the barbed wire camp, organizing Bible study and worship and a circulating library. They made clear from the beginning that they were "l'Assistance protestante" and that they came to share what they had: the Gospel. As time went on they were used by several relief agencies but kept always their evangelistic pur-

<sup>17</sup> Information in the *Coracle*, the magazine of the Community, and in other works published by its members.



pose. As months and years passed by, the work was extended to other camps; hostels for refugees were created; during the tragic period of the deportations the young teams of Cimade workers battled day and night to save as many lives as they could, and helped hundreds of men and women over the Swiss and Spanish borders. Those who saw them take such risks wondered why they did it, and were told that it was done in the name and for the sake of Christ. This was for many the point of departure of a personal decision for Christ.

In the post-war period work was started in the bombed areas of Northern France, Normandy and Alsace. The prisoners in the camps were freed, but needed help to readjust themselves to life; homes were created to receive them. Their place in camps and jails was taken by their former persecutors: they, too, needed the Gospel and Cimade set to work amongst them. The government having decided to try to reform its penitentiary system, the Cimade was asked to co-operate. It now has in twenty-seven stations, eighty-four full-time workers and one half-time worker. About a third of these are foreigners (American, Swiss, Swedish, German, Roumanian), and belong to different churches (Lutheran, Calvinist, Methodist, Baptist, Orthodox), so this has become a true ecumenical piece of work in personnel as well as finances.

What are the characteristics of this work?

1. First it is not so much an organization as a living body of people, ever ready to experiment and meet emergencies.

2. It is made up of young people (the average age is twenty-five) who for two years or more leave their professional work or their studies to consecrate this time to Evangelism.

3. These are generally untrained workers, a small number only coming from Theological schools or women's schools of training for religious workers, who come to Cimade before entering into their life's work as Pastors or church workers.

4. They work always in teams of two or more, so as to be the nucleus of a community in the *milieux* in which they live.

5. They share as much as possible the conditions of life of the people to whom they bring their witness: during the war they lived in concentration camps, they are within the walls of prisons, they plant their barracks among ruins in devastated areas. The problems, the hardships of material conditions of those they approach, they bear also.

6. They keep in mind the fact that the Salvation given by our Lord is for the whole of man, therefore they must be ready to serve human beings in all aspects of life, material, moral and spiritual.

7. Enough initiative is given to the workers to find for themselves the method of evangelism which will be best suited to their specific work. No set rule is given for them to follow except to be faithful to their witness.

8. Cimade tries to be a community where each feels spiritually responsible for the general work, and where all are associated in its development. This is made possible by biennial meetings when all the workers come together for a period of eight to ten days to unite in worship and Bible study, to discuss together the various aspects of their work and to make plans for the future.

#### INDUSTRIAL CHAPLAINS IN SCOTLAND

If the working man will not come to listen to the parson where he preaches, can the parson go to the working man where he works? The Church of Scotland has proved that in many cases he can. During the war, the experiment was made of attaching Industrial Chaplains to great works, where managements and men were willing. From a small beginning, this has grown to a great enterprise. To-day there are more than 250 such chaplains, almost all of whom are parish ministers, who voluntarily undertake the care of this "other parish". What the working man appreciates above all is absolute sincerity and simplicity; where these are found, it is only a matter of time for the chaplain to find his way into the confidence and respect of the workers. Usually it takes time, quite a long time, before factory services and discussion groups can be instituted. But long before that, the chaplain finds himself consulted on personal problems and difficulties. And contacts made inside the walls of the factory can be followed up outside it. It cannot be said that great results have as yet been attained in increased church membership, but there is already the beginning of a changed attitude to the Church. The workers know that the Church of Scotland desires to be the Church of the Scottish people.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Information communicated by the Rev. William Bodin.



An ex-Moderator of the Church of Scotland says: "In speaking to these men, I never approached them as though they were heathen. Almost all of them have been baptized or have had their children baptized; on the whole they prefer to be married in church. The connection with the Church may be only very remote. But that is our starting-point; we must help them to realize the meaning of the thing that they are dimly and half unconsciously holding on to." He was speaking of Scotland. There, though the process of secularization has gone far, it has still left a certain Christian temper and outlook, the last relic of that deep penetration of the Scottish spirit by the theology of Calvin and of the Shorter Catechism. But there are other countries in which the secularizing process has gone much further.

#### LA FRANCE, PAYS DE MISSION?

A good deal of attention has been drawn lately to a book called *La France, Pays de Mission?*,<sup>19</sup> a penetrating and serious study of the religious state of France coming from a Roman Catholic source. This is only one of a whole series of similar studies, Roman Catholic and Protestant, which probably give us fuller and more reliable information about contemporary France than about any other country. But, with certain modifications for local conditions, a great deal of what is written in these books can be applied to other countries also. From the point of view of the churches, the picture is far from encouraging; it reveals a state of things in which very much less than half the population has any regular connection with any Church or any place of worship, and in which the stratum furthest removed from the Church lives in what really can be described as paganism. One survey reckons the following external marks as indicative of this pagan condition—that the children remain unbaptized, that civil marriage rather than religious is the rule, and that moral restraints, if any, are social and not religious in their sanctions. In some areas, the mental climate is conditioned by anti-Christian ideologies, such as communism, or by traditional anti-clericalism. Even where this is not so, suspicion of the Church is deep-rooted, and any approach by the Church to these classes has to meet with many initial difficulties. Reports from all quarters indicate that at no point

<sup>19</sup> By H. Godin and Y. Daniel, Paris 1943.

and in no country has the Church been able to make a break through on a large scale into this lost country.

One of the difficulties is that the Church presents itself to the working class as incurably bourgeois. In a way this is inevitable; the bourgeois virtues of diligence, thrift, sobriety and caution are also Christian virtues. When the outcast is converted, he begins to take on the habits and colouring of the Christian society in which he has begun to move. So when the visitor from the non-Christian zone happens to make his way to a church, he finds himself at once drenched and dismayed by a bourgeois atmosphere, which he dislikes and distrusts and in which he cannot find himself at home.

An acute French Roman Catholic observer deplors the separation which results: "We priests have a culture which is bourgeois. From whatever origin we may come, our studies in the minor and major seminaries, our studies of philosophy and theology rapidly transport us into another climate, which is not exactly that of the bourgeoisie, but is closely related to it. The Abbé Godin, who came from the working classes, used to relate that when he returned from the seminary and renewed contact with his old friends, they made him realize, to his sorrow, but as he realized rightly, that he was not like them, that he was no longer one of them." The same writer continues by analysing the causes and the nature of this subtle difference: "The man of education reasons about his actions; at the lowest, he has made himself a little philosophy of existence with the help of some principles accepted by his intelligence. The world of the people acts on impulse, in which sentiment plays the principal part. The world of the people in the great cities of the present day acts according to certain materialistic aphorisms, which for it represent wisdom: 'Must take your chance when you can.' 'There aren't many good moments in life; it's silly not to enjoy yourself when you can.' Materialistic but also revolutionary, the latter type being summed up in the phrase 'You've got to defend yourself'. The man of education is proud of his critical spirit; he likes to discuss what he hears or what he reads; the last thing in the world he wants to do is to think like everyone else. The world of the people, on the contrary, thinks collectively. The opinion of the great world is its opinion and it acts accordingly. . . . The true description of this is absence of personal ideas, absence of principles, and therefore conformity to the



manner of thinking current in a man's surroundings, whether it be his place of work, or the place where he spends his spare time or the sphere of his political activity. . . . Man does not possess a clearly marked personality of his own. . . . The man of education, in making judgments, starts from certain absolutes, which serve him as criteria. In the world of the people, everything, including morality, is a matter of opinion. 'Everyone has his own ideas' is the most common formula. Furthermore, ideas have no validity; you act as you can or as you like; 'after all, a man's free, isn't he?' This instinct for liberty comes partly from the revolutionary temper, but partly from the teaching of the secularized schools, which had no universal basis . . . there remains the confused idea that everything is true or false according to the point of view, and finally that 'it's all rot, anyway'."<sup>20</sup> This analysis could probably be confirmed from many sources. One correspondent, who has recently exchanged the life of a university student for that of a factory hand, informs us that the thing that troubles him is the incapacity of his fellow-workers to think or to reason. It is possible to be convinced that what has brought the West to disaster is its over-emphasis on intellectual values, its desertion of biblical realism for the intellectualism of the Greeks, and among the Greeks its preference for Aristotle as against Plato, and yet to feel that the complete divorce of the great mass of the people from any strictly intellectual process is a great hindrance in the way of its recovery of Christian conviction and Christian standards.

#### POST-CHRISTIAN PAGANISM

All those who have striven with this great mass of post-Christian paganism are agreed that it can be reached only from within. The failure of the Church has been in incarnation; it has not been the body of Christ among the poor and down-trodden; the Gospel has not been preached as good news to the poor. For this the Church cannot be held altogether to blame. The blizzard of the Industrial Revolution swept upon it at, from the Church's point of view, the worst possible moment. During the eighteenth century, while the Industrial Revolution was gathering momentum, the Church in every country was sunk in a lethargy of complacency and spiritual ineffectiveness. The

<sup>20</sup> Paroisse, *Communauté missionnaire*, by Père Chéry O.P., Paris 1945.

great revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century came in time to palliate the evil, but by that time the secular revolution had travelled far ahead of the religious. The organization of the Church was medieval and rural; in the countryside of Brittany and the Tyrol, it has held its own. But it had no machinery suddenly to change over to meet the demands of the enormous aggregations of men, displaced persons we may almost call them, in the new industrial cities. In circumstances such as these, it is not surprising that the great masses of the working class lost all touch with the Church, that enterprises such as the Salvation Army and the MacAll Mission in Paris could not do more than touch the fringe of the problem, and that our fathers and grandfathers have left to us a burden under which the most apostolic spirit may well stagger. Now, a hundred years too late, the Church has to learn afresh the meaning of incarnation, to follow Christ in the desperate adventure of His complete self-identification with the sons of men in their poverty, sinfulness and alienation from God.

The first step in self-identification is understanding, and that understanding cannot be won outside the world of the alienated. What this means is illuminated for us by the noble words of one, a distinguished evangelist, who has set forth for us his experiences of what it meant to put himself alongside those whom he desired to win for Christ. "Understand that, at the same time as I was holding, in all sincerity, as the word of God, the truths commanded to be held by the strongest faith, I was also, by methodical doubt, pushed by an act of will to the point of the absolute abandonment of that faith, endeavouring to weigh the value of the moral or religious attitude of those whom I was meeting. I put into the effort all the sympathy I could draw from my fellowship with Jesus Christ. . . . I will not deny that I had bad times. It cost me nothing to get rid of the mental and moral habits of the bourgeoisie, and to adopt attitudes nearer to the mentality of the working class and to the demands of justice; that cost nothing but remorse that I had not done it earlier, and anxiety lest even now I was not carrying it sufficiently far in practice. It did cost me dear to withdraw myself, even provisionally, outside the world of the faith in order to think from other points of view, to submit myself to other lordships than that of Jesus Christ, to put out the light of the Gospel and to see the world as a pagan sees it, thus finding myself with-



out hope because without God in the world. . . . This kind of double existence . . . had the effect of setting up in the depths of my soul the conflict between the world and the faith, between paganism and Christianity, of dividing me, and threatening me with ruin."<sup>21</sup> Others who have made the same experiment have not found the same forceful words in which to express their experiences; but the experiment of mental adjustment is one which has to be made by every true missionary. Without becoming as a Jew, it is impossible to win the Jew; but the becoming is always costly and indeed perilous.

This identification in sympathy does not involve necessarily identification with a particular party or with one single programme of social action; it reserves to itself the right to criticize the very people that it desires to win, to see their follies and weaknesses as clearly as their virtues. There are Christians who have felt it right to join political parties of the left or near-left; others have found this incompatible with their loyalty to Christ. The true attitude of the Church is that expressed by the Whitby Conference of the International Missionary Council—complete identification with the needs of the people, and complete detachment in relation to their desires.

The problem of evangelism may also be expressed as that of natural contact. To know the workers, it is necessary to live among them and to love them. Some have found that the best way is to work with them in the shops and factories as ordinary workers, earning their own living just as others do, perhaps at the first concealing their Christian faith and their clerical character. A number of Roman Catholic priests in France have served in this way with the approval of their bishops. One Capuchin brother, who, after a considerable time in the factory and after being fully accepted into the workers' fellowship, revealed to his companions the fact that he was a monk, received the not unfriendly answer: "Oh, well, why not? Everyone has the right to be an idiot in his own way." It may be taken as almost certain that there are fields for evangelization to which access is impossible in any other way. On the other hand, it is clear that this cannot be the vocation of everyone, and there is perhaps a growing consensus of opinion that anything which suggests concealment may arouse in the workers, who have their own special sensitiveness, a resentment, a feeling of having been

<sup>21</sup> *Enquêtes sur les valeurs spirituelles à Paris*, pp. 116 et 117.

got at, which may take away all the advantage gained by naturalness in contacts at the start.

From the slums of Marseilles comes a moving account of the work of two priests, living in poverty and in the closest proximity to the life of the very poor:

“For some time I have had a companion, a brother in religion, who finds himself very quickly at home in the life of the alley. . . . My companion goes to work in the docks, and is seen alternately in his white robe and in overalls. No one is astonished. One neighbour explains to the others: ‘You see, my dear, the little Father (as he is called to distinguish him from me) has finished his studies, and now he wants to work in order to understand the miseries of the poor.’ Taking advantage of the extensive liberty granted during the period of war, the Father has obtained the Bishop’s permission to say his Mass in the evening. Several times already I had said Mass in my room. If too many people were expected, the bed and the stove were put out into the courtyard, and the Supper of the Lord was celebrated on the table at which my neighbours and I regularly took our meals. . . . Whether you approve or not, how near all felt themselves to the Jesus of the Gospels! But I had never celebrated my Mass at home as regularly as my companion, since it is quite impossible for him to celebrate in the morning before leaving for his work. In the evening, however, a few people always drop in, and sometimes those who for one reason or other do not feel themselves worthy to take part in the sacrifice send their proxies in the shape of flowers which they have bought expressly for the purpose, beautiful real flowers from the flower-shop. But more beautiful than the flowers are the genuflections, correctly made but laborious, of this priest, who has worked hard all day in the docks, and whose gestures bear the mark of all the loads that he has carried.”<sup>22</sup>

In such an enterprise we feel ourselves very near to the heart of the original Gospel. Before we can hope to see results on the large scale, we must look for the multiplication of such small groups of those who are able to live, to learn and to love within what has been so long a closed land to the Church. The break-

<sup>22</sup> M.-R. Loew; *En mission prolétarienne*, Paris.



through is slow and costly. Is any other method available by which it can be achieved?

#### THE RECOVERY OF COMMUNITY

Many people in many countries are enquiring about the right method of presentation of the Gospel to the de-Christianized proletariat in the post-Christian West. The answer is that no one knows. Methods of evangelism in the non-Christian world have been intensively studied for a hundred and fifty years. The study of this new and difficult mission-field has scarcely begun. All that can be reported at present is the experience of some pioneers, with their insistence that the first duty of the Church is to listen before it speaks, and to understand the nature of the soil in which the Word of God is to be sown before it launches out on extensive sowing.

If the break-through is achieved, even on a small scale, it ought to result in the formation of a Christian community, in the place where people live, and within the framework of the natural community. Chaplaincy work in shops and factories is useful and admirable, but it can never take the place of the parish, the Christian community based on the natural links of propinquity, common interest and mutual trust. And where is that basis to be found in the modern industrial town, or, still more, in the suburbs inhabited by the respectable class of the clerks and the better-paid artisans, a class almost as de-Christianized as the proletariat, though in a different way? Yet even in the most atomized human society, there are vestiges of community. If it is no more than by going week by week to the same grocer's shop, people do become aware of one another, and do begin to establish some kind of relationship; there must the Church begin to find its opportunity. As in the mission-field, traditionally so called, so in the modern mission-field, the great danger lies in taking the Christian out of his environment. The one criticism we have received of the great Roman Catholic movement, *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, is that the interest of its members tends to be found in their branch of the movement and not in the place where they live and work. So begins the process of detachment, of bourgeois adaptation, which may make the young Christians admirable Christians, but renders them so much the less useful as evangelists to their fellows.

The absolute necessity of a Christian community, conscious of itself as a family and in the place where its members live, has been well set forth in the classic work on the subject *La France, Pays de Mission?* (pp. 147-8):

“If in a garrison town, one collected the Christians from a dozen regiments or barracks, distributed according to the letters of the alphabet in a dozen communities, one would have Christian communities which might become extremely fervent and produce saints, but they would not become in each environment a radiating nucleus, because they would not correspond to natural communities. One would have strong and victorious Christian personalities, helping certain brothers, but seen from the interior of the barracks, they would present a certain appearance of Protestant individualism. . . . It seems that the task of a genuinely Catholic popular mission would be to discover all the natural human communities which exist, and to form in each of them, with the aid of a priest, a Christian nucleus which would become a radiating community.”

In a Protestant setting, a few words and phrases of this account might have to be altered, but has not the statement of the problem and of the method by which alone it can be solved a certain right of reality and truth? In so far as the Church can be said to have been successful in the recovery of lost ground, it seems to have been by the rebuilding of the sense of community through a Christian group, which was in the first place a worshipping community.

#### THE RETURN OF THE INTELLECTUAL ÉLITE

We should lose perspective in this survey if we allowed it to be supposed that the very poor are the most extensively de-Christianized class. Our Lord said that it was hard for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, which is a very different thing from saying that it is hard for them to become respectable. They do, but that does not make them citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the last resort it is the intellectual *élite* which makes the mind of a nation, though it may take long for the thoughts of the *élite* to penetrate the mind of the common man. One of the most serious factors in the Christian situation for many years has



been the almost complete isolation of the intellectual world from the faith and practice of the Church. For some time, there have been welcome signs that a change is taking place. One well qualified to judge has hazarded the opinion that "as the *élite* were the first to go, perhaps they will be the first to come back". It is not possible for man to live for long on nihilism. As we saw, the almost desperate question of the young educated people of the world is: "Is there anything else except nihilism?" If the Church, especially through the voice of laymen, can show plainly that there is something else, and that it has been won as painfully, and with as desperate determination to know nothing but the truth, as any modern ideology, then there is good hope that some at least of the younger generation will be found ready to listen and to embark on the dangerous adventure of taking the Christian Faith seriously.

#### AN ILLUSTRATION FROM GREECE

The separation of the intellectuals from the faith tends to be at its apogee in countries where the Church is served by an uneducated priesthood and the schools and universities have been secularized. To a large extent both these conditions have been experienced in Greece. The village priesthood, faithful as it was in its vocation, had had little chance of theological education, and in many cases knew little more than the ritual and the music of the Mass. Schools and universities had been under a dominantly secular and unbelieving influence. One of the most remarkable evangelistic enterprises that has come to our notice is the statement on the relations between science and religion put forth by a body of Greek men of science. Put in crude language, the burden of this document is that it is not necessary to be an ignoramus in order to be a Christian. This is a discovery which has been made in other countries also, but in Greece it came with the force of a new revelation. Many thousands of copies of the document have been circulated, both in Greece and in Cyprus, and there is no doubt that its effect on the minds of many readers has been profound. These Greek scientists naturally owed much to the writings of their colleagues in other countries who were Christians. But their effort was independent and not called forth by any impetus from without; much of its value resided in its completely non-clerical character.

To the intellectual world it is nearly always the layman who can speak with the greatest force and the greatest power of carrying conviction.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE CONVENTIONAL CHRISTIAN

Last of all, what are we to say of that large class, the nominal Christians who know the Gospel but have never experienced it as regenerating love, who have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof? In an earlier document sent out by our commission, this class is spoken of in terms on which we find ourselves unable to improve:

“These are the people who have made terms with the Gospel, without surrendering to its demands, who satisfy themselves that they are Christians by observing its outward forms and evade its more embarrassing requirements by careful attention to those which can be fulfilled without moral upheaval. These people are not merely most recalcitrant to attempts to show them the vanity of their religion in the eyes of God, but are also the greatest obstacle in the way of the evangelization of those who are outside the churches. The unattractiveness of Christianity as seen in them is taken by those outside to constitute the final condemnation of Christianity in all its forms.”

We must not yield to the temptation to exaggerate in our condemnation of these conventional and lifeless Christians. After all, the strength of their position lies just in the fact that their claims for themselves are so largely true. It is their regular attendance at Church which has kept the structure of the Church in being, where otherwise it would have disintegrated. It is their financial support which has enabled the Church to struggle on, at least to maintain a ministry and regular worship as a witness to men that there is a reality beyond the visible world. Within the rather narrow limits of what they regard as obligatory, they have maintained a remarkably high ethical standard; their virtue is not all hypocrisy, their profession of loyalty to Christ is not all affectation. It is much more the reality of their goodness than the perfection of their hypocrisy which

<sup>23</sup> Information communicated by Prof. G. Bratsiotis, Athens.



makes them almost impregnable against the assaults of the real Gospel of Christ. It is far harder for the pride of fallen man to accept the forgiveness of God for his virtues than to submit to God's judgment on his sins.

And after all, the congregations are very much what the clergy have made them. For the most part, the clergy have been content to preach traditional dogma unrelated to the pressure of contemporary perplexities, or a moralism severely conditioned by the accepted standards of a quasi-Christian society. In neither case has the Gospel as preached by them borne much relation to the explosive variety proclaimed in Galilee and sealed on Calvary. Our complacent Christian congregations would be very gravely disturbed by the thought that God might really put down the mighty from their seat and exalt the humble and meek. They find it hard to imagine that anyone can take seriously the proposition that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. In the Protestant churches, they have not had too many examples before their eyes of those who venture all on taking the Gospel seriously. Even in Roman Catholic countries, where the existence of monasticism might serve as a daily challenge to consider what the Gospel really demands of men and women, the tendency is to suppose that the monk and the nun have made their sacrifice not in order to challenge ordinary Christians to make the perfect surrender of themselves to Christ in the terms and under the conditions of their own vocation, but just in order that, sacrifice being concentrated as it were by proxy in one part of the Church, the other part might be exempted from the disturbing necessity of accepting the totalitarian demands of Christ.

#### EVANGELISM, AN ECUMENICAL TASK

Without the conversion of the Church, world-evangelism cannot be more than a name. If anything has stood out clearly in the course of this long study, it is that evangelism is weak, when it depends on the devotion and initiative of a gifted individual. It is unfruitful until it has incarnated itself in a community. It can be effective according to the will of God only where it is the Church itself, the whole company of faithful people, which is the evangelizing instrument, since it is only the whole Church which can bring the Gospel gloriously out of the church building and

the cloistered calm of the sanctuary into every corner and crevice of that world which, by the grace of God, has already been redeemed through Christ, and has to be brought in fact and in reality into the realm of that redemption.

The Church cannot become the evangelizing body until it recovers New Testament Christianity. What that would mean is the business of this whole volume, indeed of all the Assembly volumes, to set forth. Here attention may be drawn, in the context of evangelism, to two points which might in other connections be overlooked.

The early Church was ecumenical in its outlook. It took it for granted that this Gospel was to be preached throughout the world, and that where Christ had given so clear a command, He could be relied on to supply the means. But it also recognized that ecumenical Christianity meant the acceptance of the local Christian brother across all the difficulties and divisions of race, habit and background. The effort was so great that it strained the grace of God to the utmost and nearly broke the Church in two; but in the end the Jewish Christian did what he had thought impossible and accepted the Gentile as really a brother in Christ; and the Gentile got over his horror of circumcision and was willing to sit at the table of the Lord with the Jew. The Christian of New Testament times took it for granted that where he went the local fellowship of Christians was his home and that he must seek for no other. Modern Christianity has not even begun to be ecumenical. The ordinary worshipping congregation in a European city does not consciously rejoice in the fellowship of the Eskimo and the Sea Dyak; in fact, if the Eskimo or the Sea Dyak, in natural attire and bringing with him his characteristic atmosphere, were to come in and sit down beside it, the congregation might show signs of perturbation and distaste. The Christian stranger in a foreign land does not take it as a matter of course that he will seek out whatever Christian fellowship may happen to be there and make it his home, even if it involves sitting on the ground with humble African or Indian Christians. It must be emphasized that until acceptance of the fellow-Christian and self-identification with the fellow-Christian, whatever his race or habits, and still more difficult, whatever his denomination, is taken for granted, we have not really begun to be Christian; we have not reached the standing-ground from which evangelism becomes a serious possibility.



Evangelism is the proclamation of the death of Christ. It would be well if the churches would take seriously the apostolic teaching as to the place and the means by which the Lord's death is principally and indispensably to be proclaimed. *As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.* Holy Communion every Sunday for every Christian, except those formally excommunicated, was the rule and practice of the Church. Proclamation of the Gospel on any other basis was unthinkable. One of the great Reformation insights was the recovery of this principle. The Reformation broke on the obstinate adherence of the people to the medieval deformation of Christian worship, and their refusal to be guided by the Word of God. To-day there is no Church in the world (except some of the smaller pietistic bodies) which can claim that it is showing forth in doctrine and practice anything that even faintly resembles New Testament Christianity. Recovery of New Testament doctrine and New Testament order are highly important things, and rightly engage the attention of the learned. But perhaps we have got the order wrong; perhaps a little experiment in New Testament obedience might not be out of place. If the churches were to make the few simple changes in their order which would be involved in this return to the New Testament, and would accept the universal obligation of the sacramental proclamation of the Lord's death every Sunday by His Church, the results might be surprising. The churches might discover that, without knowing how, they had again become the body of Christ. They might find that the hidden forces of evangelism had broken through, and that it was once more within their power to show forth Christ as the Saviour of the World.

# VI

## THE APPROACH TO ADHERENTS OF OTHER FAITHS

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### PREFACE

*As has been indicated in the preface to Section I, the old distinctions between the Christian and non-Christian world have largely broken down. Yet there is a difference in the approach to the man who has never heard of Christ at all, and that to the man whose outlook has to some extent been conditioned by upbringing in a partially Christian country. In this section we have attempted to indicate the problem of approach in three widely different religious areas.*

*The approach to Israel is the standing challenge to the Christian Church. Do Christians who have Jewish neighbours expect and desire that these Jewish neighbours will become Christians? If not, have they any right to claim an interest in evangelism elsewhere? The problem of Israel in God's purpose and of the future of the Jews in the world are controversial in the extreme, and on many matters there may be legitimate difference of view among Christians. But if we hold that Christ died for all men, and that His Gospel is to be preached to all nations, the proclamation of the Gospel to Israel stands out as an absolute obligation from which the Church must not try to escape.*



## (a) ASPECTS OF THE MODERN SITUATION IN INDIA

by *S. W. Savarimuthu*

**T**HIS paper has been written in Sweden, after an absence of more than six months from India. In the swirl of change statements here made may already be questioned: and a picture true to-day may "date" before the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in August, 1948. We can but try to indicate some permanent elements in the approach of the Christian evangelist to adherents of the higher religions in the modern world.

I THE EFFECT OF NATIONALISM AND INDEPENDENCE ON  
CHRISTIAN PROPAGANDA

"Propaganda" is a good Christian word lately corrupted in secular use. It is better to regard our task as "evangelism" rather than as "propaganda". "Evangelism" is biblical, Christian; as comprehensive as Christianity itself.

Again the word "Evangelist" in certain sections of the "mission-field" has come to mean the paid agent of a particular mission, more or less qualified for the task, who speaks to a small or large group for some time and is then at liberty to do other jobs. What he does elsewhere should not, he desires, be mixed up with what he means to say in his evangelistic message; and the group he addresses, he feels, is a loose crowd who should be taken as individuals and nothing more.

This is, in fact, a veritable inflation of the "coins minted in the New Testament". Evangelism is the "preaching", the *kerugma*, of the word of faith by a representative of the Spirit-filled community to men and women who are not yet "united by faith with them that heard" (Heb. iv, 2).

It follows that the work of the evangelist is part of the total impact of the Christian community on the entire environment of men who have not yet accepted the evangel in faith.

Similarly, the adherents of the higher religions are first of all men and women, individuals, centres of consciousness. But they

live and move and have their being in a circle that includes, within its ambit, aspects which seem incongruous and inconsistent, but are taken into a living unity. They are a people, an historic society, with "a local habitation and a name", a language that both conserves and expresses their thought and life, religious, social, and political.

Nationalism in India is another complex whole. It is as broad and deep as Indian life in general. Now one aspect, now another comes to the conscious level, but at bottom it is a unity in variety. The emphasis, in increasing intensity, has long been on the political struggle to express itself against British Imperialism. Since that struggle has won its legitimate victory, other phases of the national urge begin to manifest themselves, clearly or vaguely, gently or with violence.

The religious revival, which has been long pent up, occasionally spurting out, is now gaining momentum as it takes step after step. The ramifications of this religious nationalism can be traced by the vigilant eye in almost every aspect of Indian life.

In education, for instance, English, which was the first language and the chief medium of instruction, is now fast giving place to the mother tongue, even up to the university standard. When Tamil becomes the medium of instruction, it brings in its wake all that the Tamils have stood for, politically, socially, culturally, and not the least in religion during four or more millennia. There was a time when the Christian boys of a mission school complained, after a period in Tamil language, that the Tamil pandit was saying things which went directly against what the Christian master had taught them in the preceding Scripture class. Now, not only the English language, which both conserves and expresses Christianity, is pushed into the background, but its place is "occupied" by Tamil.

Roughly it may be said that what English is to the Britisher, Tamil is to the Tamilian. Those who know the two languages with some real understanding will be able to gauge the depth and significance of the effect of replacing English by Tamil on Christian evangelism. What has been vague during the days of nationalism is now effectually achieved and enforced as a result of political independence; and scripture teaching is steadily being banned from the regular school hours.

A reverse process is at work. Most of the place names in South



India which were wrongly pronounced and ill spelt by the Englishman changed their pronunciation and spelling: e.g. Tirunelvaly became Tinnevely, Nagapattinam became Nega-patam. Now there is a return to the beautiful old and meaningful names. This may be regarded as a sort of paradigm for almost everything that concerns evangelism in independent India.

Education in general and women's education in particular has been largely the outcome of the pioneer work of the Christian missionaries. Time was when missionaries and Indian Christians were the leaders in all educational matters. The pioneering work of Christians has awakened the non-Christians to such an extent that they are not merely in the vanguard but would scarcely, if ever, give room for Christian leadership.

The religious revival, cultural renaissance, and social revolution set in motion by the direct or indirect impact of the Christian enterprise in India have gone so far that many would not only discount their debt to Christianity, but also assert that they could very well do without it. The Harijan Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi may be traced, with some justification, to his fear of the dangerous possibility of the masses of the oppressed and depressed classes of India moving away from Hinduism and into the Christian Church as they were already beginning to do in hundreds of thousands. Most of the social and economic disabilities of these castes are fast being removed by the government now in power both in the provinces and in the Centre. The Christian who was once an untouchable is led to think that his present position is not after all any better, materially, than that of his social compeer outside the Church. A few have been reconverted to Hinduism with the help and approval of men of higher castes and positions.

The religious resurgence has been such that they not only study and imitate the missionary methods of the Christians but they seek to improve on them. Formerly the Danish Mission Reading-Room and the Kellett Institute were the only two public halls in Madras where lectures on religion and social subjects were delivered. Speakers aspiring to a public hearing sought the favour of men in charge of these halls for trying their mettle in the art of public-speaking. But to-day there are more than ten such places where regular meetings are held on various subjects by men of ability. And it is hard to get these men to speak

in our halls, and few attend such lectures when delivered under our auspices.

They study, imitate and improve upon the Christian and literary societies, issue books of all sorts and prices. If the Christian issues a diary with a Bible verse for each day, the Tamilian issues a diary with a Kural couplet for each day! Examples could be multiplied. The Annammalai University in Chidambaram is eclipsing the Nataraja temple in the town by aspiring to become the cultural centre of the Tamil country.

Enough has been said to show that the dormant spirit of nationalism, awakened and confirmed by political independence, is now expressing itself in many ways. This is bound to hamper those who seek to approach the adherents of the higher religions with the Word of the Gospel.

## II JESUS THE TEACHER

Educated Indians and adherents of higher religions, have doubtless evinced a keen interest in, and a deep appreciation of, "the teaching of Christ". Multitudes in India, as in Palestine, have been "astonished at His teaching". But they did not go even so far as the Jews did when they knew that "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

Adherents of higher religions in India, perhaps elsewhere, too, have not recognized the compelling authority of the Master, because they have not been taught to contrast His teaching with the ethical codes of their own law-givers—a Thiruvalluvar, a Manu or a Chanakya. In other words, they have not been taught to proceed from the "teaching" to the divine-human personality of the Teacher, Who teaches with authority, and *not* as their scribes, a Yajnavalkya, a Shankara or a Ramanuja. The good in this case, as in others, has been the enemy of the better.

Excessive concentration on the teaching of Christ has led them to believe that they could have the Law without the Gospel, ethics without Faith. From their pre-suppositions it is not surprising that they not only "compared" Christian ethics with their own but even asserted that theirs are better. It is only natural that to them Christ *is one among the many*. The decisive challenge of *the One* still remains to be faced. Both Christian theology and evangelism and the characteristic Hindu view of religion have been responsible for this result. Christ, or rather,



Jesus of Nazareth may be acclaimed as a Mahatma, a superman, a religious genius, or an Avatar. He may be even a god, but he cannot be worshipped as "My Lord and my God".

This phenomenon may be viewed from another angle. When Christ is presented as the moral teacher, the Hindu refers to the high morality of the *Kural* of Thiruvalluvar. When Christ is presented as the *Bhagavan* or the Lord who is worthy of our *bhakti* or faith he refers to the *Thiruvvasagam* or the *Tevaram*, the *bhakti* literature of the Tamils. The *Kural* looks mainly at the horizontal relationship between God and man without any vital reference to God. (It is open to serious doubt whether the first chapter of the *Kural*, which does contain references to God, is really one with the body of the treatise.) On the other hand, the *Thiruvvasagam* and the *Tevaram* are concerned mainly with the vertical relationship between God and man without any living relation to the fellow-man. In Christ the relationship is neither purely nor exclusively horizontal or vertical. When a man is in Christ, he is vertically in contact with God, and horizontally in a relation of loving service to his neighbour. The truth of the relationship is not merely God and I: nor I and my neighbour, but God, I and my neighbour. This is the Law and the Prophets.

From this point of view, one could go on to say that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of both the *Kural* and the *Thiruvvasagam* simultaneously. Nor could one stop there. He is their fulfilment after fulfilling them both together, shattering each in its dangerously one-sided emphasis and pointing to the higher synthesis that is Incarnate in Himself.

An insight into the ethical and religious literature of a particular social group like the Tamils might give us the cue to the kind of religious and theological research which could develop a Christian apologetic, negative and positive.

### III "THE AREA OF CONTACT"

The question of the area of contact is as important as it is difficult. Various opinions have been held and as often criticized. One may perhaps be cheered by the reflection that the earlier missionaries established better contact when they were not hampered by stiff theories. But one could presume that they would have been happier to get some working theory which would con-

firm their practice and in some measure guide their daily work.

It is legitimate and necessary to find points of contact with those whom we want to evangelize. We are certainly nearer to the adherents of the higher religions than to the materialists, or the Lokayatas as they were called in India.

The first point of importance is the fact that all evangelists and hearers are the creatures of God. "O God, Thou hast created us unto Thyself, and our hearts are restless (or unquiet) until they find rest in Thee" (Augustine). Again, "Be comforted, thou wouldst not seek Me hadst thou not found Me. Thou wouldst not have sought Me unless thou hadst possessed me" (Pascal).

Let us try to understand the first statement of Augustine. The relation spoken about is that between the Creator and the creature. The Creator is not only the cause of our restlessness but also its cure. Could we not perhaps restate the sentence somewhat as follows: "O God, Thou hast created us unto Thyself: Thou dost keep our hearts restless until Thou givest us rest." The restlessness of the human heart is not so crudely anthropocentric as is suggested in some quarters. God the Creator is concerned in restoring fallen humanity to its "rest" in Himself. To those of us who have been met by God in the Incarnation of His Son, this fact of God's concern comes with refreshing clarity. "If there is any meaning in it, it means that God wants, even passionately wants, contact with man, and thus through the act of His revelation shows His belief in the possibility of contact. Stronger argument than this for the existence of this point in man there cannot be. The apostolic nature of God's revelation in Christ presupposes it."<sup>1</sup>

A patient and scientific study of the life and writings of more than one non-Christian saint from different religious atmospheres reveals the fact that there is a common humanity, a common capacity for moral and religious experience, effort, achievement and failure, common aspirations, needs and dreads. Nay more, there is not only seeking but also finding, the joy and exultation of having been found of the Lord. It is here that the Christian evangelist must evince an "untiring interest in the religion, the ideas, sentiments and the institutions—in short, in the whole range of the life of the people among whom he works, for Christ's sake and for the sake of the people."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Klaemer, *The Christian Message*, etc., pp. 130ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.



It is essential to realize a fact of major importance. All the time the Christian evangelist is seeking to establish points of contact with the non-Christian, he is also seeking and finding points of contact with the evangelist and his evangel *in his own way*. It is common experience of those who have attempted to preach the Gospel in India to the adherents of higher Hinduism, that at the end of a talk someone comes to us and says: "Thank you for the message: we have the same idea or truth in our scriptures. So-and-so has said like this," and gives a quotation. The danger lies in the evident conclusion that he has drawn: "All the religions are the same: there is nothing after all so different from mine in yours."

Here, then, the area of contact turns out to be an area of conflict from the "radical" "apostolic" Christian point of view. Every point of contact is surely a beginning only, for the contact may lead to further contact, or it may develop into conflict. From the time the seed is sown to the time of its harvest there are many stages, at any one of which the growth may be thwarted by Satan, by tribulation, or by thorns (Mark iv, 14-20). And it is in one or more of these stages that the "totalitarian" aspect of the religion to which the man belongs conflicts with the total claims of Christ and the system of Christian thought and life. And it is just here that it is most important to remember that, although the man belongs to a religious system, he is still and continues to be a thinking, deciding human being. And with this understanding the Christian should lead him into the wrestle between his personality and that of his Saviour.

Dr. Kraemer makes the missionary the point of contact.<sup>3</sup> "The missionary" should not be made to mean the person sent from Europe or America to India or the East, but the "man with the message" or "the man with the Word". Even so, he should not be considered as an individual, pure and simple. Every Christian is, or ought to be, a source of contact: *actually* he may be—as often he is—a bad ambassador for Christ. But with and beyond the individual Christian, there is the community of Christian believers, the Church, the Body of Christ, of which we are all members.

The task of evangelism and of the evangelist is to be the ambassador for Christ, through the Church, in "announcing" the Gracious Word, to bring the hearer into fellowship with

<sup>3</sup> H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, etc., p. 140.

God and the faithful. In other words, the real missionary is the Christian Church in which Christ lives and reigns with His saving grace of forgiveness. It is the life of this "fellowship" in joy and in suffering that draws in those outside.

The evangelist who is a member of this fellowship may be used of God to mediate Him to the others. It is essential to realize the humbling fact that we Christians and Christian evangelists more often *hide* God than *reveal* Him. It is our comfort to know that because this treasure is put in earthen vessels, God reveals Himself in our "hiding" Him, so that the glory might belong to God alone.

Contact is, therefore, a work of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit always works in a community: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst." In any case, the Spirit works in more than one person simultaneously. The Spirit moves not only a Cornelius but also a Peter: not only a Saul but also an Ananias. Thus contact is an act of the Spirit of God between two or more persons.

This aspect of the fellowship may be pushed further: In a country like India where the Ashram life has been in practice for several millennia, a Christian Ashram may become a growing point. It is a small group of Spirit-filled Christians, of more than one nationality, perhaps, seeking to live a life of fellowship and to develop a corporate personality, and demonstrating it in life, thought and word, in prayer, meditation and study. It is a church within the Church, growing out of her, supported by her, and serving her as a centre of experiments and demonstrations of the Christian corporate life and seeking to influence the world outside.

The life of the Christian is the Bible of the non-Christian. The life of the Christian Ashram may be the Bible that he who runs may read.

#### IV THE POINT OF STRESS

The Gospel is one, unchangeable and indivisible. It is committed to us, deposited in the Church, witnessed by the Apostles. We cannot, nay, we shall not add to it or subtract from it. We can only receive it in faith and obey it. And we must go on preaching it.

But the Gospel is too great for us. We with our little minds and lesser hearts could see it only darkly as in a glass. And there-



fore we could take for ourselves only such aspects or elements of it as we are capable of receiving. It is therefore but natural that in the history of Christian apologetics, now one aspect and now another has been grasped and communicated to others. There is thus a twofold limitation: the limitation of the evangelist, on the one hand, and that of the hearer, on the other.

The stress in the India of the early decades of the present century has been, as has been shown above, on Christ the Teacher. Perhaps that was what the evangelists of the time considered to be the essence of the Gospel or what would "appeal" to the Hindu. The result has been nothing short of disaster.

The point of stress for the preaching of the Gospel in the world of to-day is faith in the Resurrection of Christ, by "God the Father, who raised Him from the dead".

The Hindu or the Moslem has, outside the special revelation in Christ, "understood by the things that are made His eternal power and godhead". This is, indeed, the opening door when the Christian evangelist speaks to him of the God of Power, the God Who raised Christ from the dead. For the non-Christian will or must raise the question: Why from the dead? Then the evangelist presents his Gospel as it developed historically in the life of the Church. From the faith of the Risen Lord backward to the fact of the crucified Saviour—the causes or the events, the purpose that led Him to the Cross; later His miracles and teaching—and lastly the stories concerning His birth. (The Hindu has had no great difficulty in the virgin birth, nor has it been a matter of major theological difficulty to Indian Christians, except for those who have inherited the problem from Western theologians.)

Is not this the order in which the gospels came to be written? Is not the Resurrection the faith of the primitive Church? Is it not here that the Apostle Paul has laid the stress—Faith in the Risen Lord?

When this approach is made there follows in natural sequence, the stress on the Church, the Spirit-filled community, the Society of the forgiven.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Risen Lord and of God the Father. After His resurrection, Jesus lives and reigns everywhere, but chiefly and dynamically in His Body, the Church. Or, conversely, where Christ is with forgiving grace, there is life and bliss, that is the Church.

It is the Church where this faith is to be made dynamic in acts of love (Gal. iv, 6). Wherever this faith is directed inwardly towards God and outwardly towards our neighbour, we are in relation both with God and our neighbour: our "neighbour" includes both those that are of the household of faith and those that stand outside.

(b) THE APPROACH TO ADHERENTS OF A PRIMITIVE  
RELIGION IN NEW GUINEA

*by George F. Vicedom*

THERE is no single missionary method which can be applied at all times and in all places. Primitive peoples differ greatly from one another, both in their original characteristics and in their disintegration due to the impact of Western civilization. Missionaries come from various churches and schools of thought, and their missionary methods are often determined by their theology and by the customs of their church at home. In this paper, therefore, I can only describe some experiences of my own among the very backward peoples of New Guinea, in the hope that they may also be of use to missionaries working in a different setting.

I

The following obvious principles of missionary method are, of course, presupposed:

1. The missionary is an ambassador of Christ. Primitive peoples judge the Christian message, and God Himself, by what the missionary says and does. His responsibility is therefore immense.

2. In the person of the missionary primitive people meet a world which is entirely foreign to them. The first thing the missionary has to do, therefore, is to establish a right relation between himself and his hearers. He must meet them on the plane of our common humanity, just as God became man in His Son in order to bridge the gulf between Himself and us.



3. The missionary tries to do this by learning their language as fully as possible, and in his life by trying to adopt their laws and customs as far as the Gospel will allow him to do so. In this way he will become familiar with their way of thinking, and this will enable him to express the Christian message in a way that touches their hearts.

4. He can only apply his message aright, if he himself has thoroughly studied the life and religion of his hearers, and has set them in relation to the Gospel before he begins to preach.

5. In his preaching he must not take 1 Cor. i and ii as his starting-point. These chapters must be understood in the light of chapter xv, 3-4, where we read that Paul's preaching was "according to the scriptures", i.e. was based on the fundamental preaching about God.

6. In all conversions mixed motives play a certain part, especially in the case of mass movements. But God uses even such conversions for His own purpose; and He entrusts His messenger with the task of turning a superficial conversion into something inward and real. There are no real conversions apart from repentance and amendment of life.

7. The missionary must be an "Ambassador of Christ", and not a social reformer. Among primitive peoples bad social conditions are all linked up with their religion. Thus their whole mind and outlook must first of all be transformed by the Word of God; then their elevation in the social scale will follow as a matter of course.

## II

The actual problem of finding a point of contact arises first of all in the preaching itself, for the message is strange to the man who hears it. The missionary should begin with something which his hearers already understand, in order to make the new idea comprehensible to them. In making the point of contact, however, there is always the danger that the new message may be understood in the old, heathen terms. The better a missionary learns the language the less danger will there be of this kind of misunderstanding. A further danger is that of making a premature attack upon pagan abuses. This is bound to provoke opposition, because primitive peoples only acknowledge the authority of the particular god to whom they are

bound by their origin. "Your God has nothing to do with us!" Further, every "point of contact" is wrong which uses the pagan religion as a logical proof of the rightness of the Christian message. Primitive people instinctively reject this kind of argument. They are guided, not by their heads but by their hearts. The best method is always a simple, sincere, and positive presentation of the message.

Why is this so? It is because God is already in contact with every human being. The missionary can build on what God has already implanted within the human heart, especially the two facts of the religious sense and conscience. The missionary must ask himself: What is the attitude of primitive man to the Numinous? How far is he aware of his "creatureliness"? Has he a certain sense of dependence on the gods? How does he express his sense of need for communion with the higher powers? If we study these questions among primitive peoples we make the surprising discovery that they only have religious contact with those supernatural powers with which they are causally connected, i.e. with the spirits of their ancestors and with the creator-god. Their relation to the other supernatural powers in their religion is more or less confined to magic. So here the missionary has found an important starting-point: he can show his hearers their connection with God, in order to bring them into a religious relation with Him. The more the message is psychologically attuned to the religious attitude of his hearers, the more successful the missionary will be.

Every religion is expressed in conduct, i.e. through the conscience. The missionary must therefore try to touch the conscience of his hearers. This is especially difficult in the case of primitive peoples. There are anthropologists and missionaries who say that these people have no conscience at all, because they can do all kinds of things without any apparent effect upon their conscience, and they behave as if they were innocent lambs! This judgment is mistaken. Their religion only determines their right attitude to their god, and not to men in general, and only to those who are connected with their own god. On the other hand, among primitive peoples there exists a proof which is important for the Christian message. Among all primitive peoples we find commandments which are not unlike the Decalogue. These would not exist unless people had a certain glimmering of moral obligation to their neighbours as well as



to their god. Since the lawgiver has been forgotten, the ancestors have become the guardians of these commandments, and that is why they are only kept by their descendants. If we succeed in convincing the conscience of these primitive people that God is the Lawgiver, we have found a second important point of contact.

The commandments are only valid within the tribe. The individual members are so closely related by blood, that they can only take a decision in agreement with the tribe. According to the commandments they are responsible for one another and bound to help one another. Here therefore we have to do with a collective tribal-conscience. Personal freedom and personal decisions exist among primitive peoples only outside the tribe. Anyone who takes a decision against the tribe is expelled from the community united by the tie of blood. This applies also to religious matters. Crimes committed by individuals are regarded as sins of the community. The tribe purifies itself from these sins, if necessary, by driving out the sinner. The worship of primitive peoples is always an affair of the community. Therefore among primitive peoples individual conversions can only take place if the individual leaves his family-clan. In so doing he loses his rights in the primitive community. Mission work among primitive peoples has always suffered from this fact.

The history of modern missions shows us that this difficulty need not exist. Great successes have been achieved when the preaching has been consciously addressed to the collective conscience of the tribe, i.e. when an attempt has been made to convert the tribe as a whole, or when the whole tribe has been brought to God through the witness of individual converts. We can trace this trend in all mass movements among primitive peoples. The Christian message touches the tribal conscience and not so much the conscience of the individual. On the other hand, on Nias, for instance, we can trace a certain arrest in the mass movement, because there the experience of God did not spread from the individual to the conscience of the community.

The missionary approaches the task of restoring the original connection between his listeners and God, by telling them the story of the Creation. This story has proved of inestimable value among primitive peoples. The more fully it is believed (and this soon happens, because God speaks here as Creator), the more the

pagan religion is shaken. Primitive people are here confronted by the One God, Who, as Creator, is the Lord of all things, and especially the Lord of man. Through God's act of creation all peoples are of one blood, hence the ancestors and local gods lose their significance. The soul comes from God, so there is no frightening ghost which goes on living among the spirits of the ancestors. God had made all things good—so the old traditions were lies. God as Creator and Lord is the supreme revelation to primitive peoples. In New Guinea I have experienced again and again how His name spread like fire from village to village, and how the story of the Creation became the general topic of conversation among the population.

Through this preaching the primitive idea of God undergoes a fundamental change. The deistically conceived creator-god, far removed from this world, is replaced by the Creator-God and Lord, Who is near and living, Who has become not only the Creator of primitive society but also their Father in Jesus Christ. It is the Fatherhood of God which first of all makes the greatest impression on these primitive people. But this change in their idea of God brings with it a change in their sense of sin. Just because they are so deeply impressed by God's Fatherhood, they realize that their right relation with Him is determined by their right relation to their brothers—sin against one's brother is also sin against the Father. Thus the sphere of conscience is greatly extended; the content of conscience is deepened by the Word, and its standard is given absolute validity by God.

When this change in the idea of God has taken place in the conscience of primitive peoples, the time has come to use the antithetical point of contact. There are plenty of points of contact, of which only a few can be mentioned here. All religions try to solve the problem of death. Primitive man attributes the cause of death either to the spirits (in which case he resigns himself to his fate) or to evil men—in which case he tries to appease the spirit of the dead by revenge, and thus to root out the evil. His need for salvation is eudaemonistic, and is confined in a self-centred way to this world. Here the story of the Fall, taken in connection with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, works in a redeeming way: for death is the result of sin, of the broken relation between man and God. In this way primitive peoples begin to get some idea, for the first time, of the ultimate depths of sin; although they are still too much involved in their previous



ideology to grasp at once redemption as a whole. They think that they will be saved from death if they live a sinless life.

Nevertheless the Message concerning Jesus Christ is very important for them. The fact that God has restored the relation between Himself and the human race through His Son, is of great significance for their tribal way of thought. Jesus becomes their brother, and thus brings them into touch with God again. In this way He becomes their Friend and Helper, Who shows them the way to the Father. Here a completely new religious world opens up to primitive people. The blood-feud disappears; they can live in peace. As God forgives our sins for Jesus' sake, so we must forgive one another. God does not ask for any sacrifices, as the spirits did; anyone may call upon His Name with impunity, even women, and everyone may pray to Him and tell Him all that is in his heart. God does not shroud Himself in mystery, but permits His Word to be proclaimed to men. They find they can rejoice in God, something which they could never do in their pagan days.

### III

The assimilation of the Christian message and the deepening of people's understanding of it, depend essentially on the right way of preaching and applying it. We give four examples of the right way of presenting the message:

1. The message must always be addressed to the congregation as a whole.

2. The message must always be one of good tidings. Primitive people are already suffering quite enough from the pressure of the law; the burden should not be made heavier. They do not want to hear what God demands of them, but what God has done for them.

3. The Law and the Gospel must therefore be applied in the right way. This is done by placing the God Who acts (on the basis of the Bible stories) in the very centre of the message. Here the Law and the Gospel are united. On the basis of the Bible stories the full content of the message can always be presented. In them the hearers can see how much God cares about men—the trouble He takes over them, how men decide for or against Him, and His attitude to their decision. So the figures of the Bible serve as examples for primitive people.

4. Out of consideration for his hearers, too, the missionary should not preach on a different subject every time, but should keep to one subject until it has been understood. Different stories from the Bible may be used as illustrations every time, but the fundamental ideas must be the same. If something is still not clear to his hearers, he can resort to parables and the language of symbolism.

Once the contact between God and man has been established, it is not very difficult to see that the message is carried out in action, so long as the missionary takes care not to place the Christian Gospel on the same level as the pagan religion, which would encourage hypocrisy. For example, when the Mumeng in New Guinea continued to commit pagan misdeeds even after they had been converted to Christianity, the missionary took away their catechists and teachers. "You don't need any more assistance!" he said. "First of all do what God has already told you!" The effect was astonishing. The whole tribe discussed the situation, and then decided to make a thorough clearance of all their pagan practices; then they said: "Give us our helpers back again! When they left us, God went away. We cannot live any longer without His Word!" If the missionary upholds the honour of God, such a radical change takes place in the life of the tribe that it is like a miracle. The more successful the primitive people are in their new life, the more they regard it as a proof of the truth of the Christian message. The words of John vii, 17 come from their hearts. They know God in obedience.

Conversion does not take place without a struggle. The Gospel must renew the whole of life. On Mount Hagen in New Guinea at a meeting of the tribe, the missionary was offered some pigs if only he would go away and take his God with him. For while he was there they felt they could not go on practising their pagan customs. But some of the young men replied: "It is impossible to send this God away again. He lives in our own hearts. As soon as we want to do something, a voice asks whether it is right before God. And we don't want Him to go away. We don't want to return to paganism." The struggle swayed from one experience to the other. Months later ten tribes at a big tribal gathering decided in favour of God. The pagan customs were expressly forbidden, and their decision for God was publicly and solemnly celebrated. For the first time Christianity was accepted



by the whole tribe, and the individual Christian was no longer confronted by the antagonism of his tribe.

In all their struggle to lead a new life, in spite of all their joy in the life which God has given them, a certain discontent gradually creeps in. The people realize that in spite of all their honest intentions, evil cannot be completely eradicated. In their pagan religion, if they acted in the prescribed way, they had a feeling of security—a feeling of being in the favour of the god. The Christian Gospel does not give this guarantee. Illnesses and accidents occur, in which the hand of God is recognized, and which are traced back to human sin. At first their eagerness to fulfil God's will is all the stronger. But they cannot attain their object. They cannot rely on their own "works". Here the Christian message is faced by a dilemma. Even in the case of faithful preaching the idea of sin cannot be deepened, and the need for salvation cannot be further awakened through preaching the Cross. Here the missionary is helped by the practice of the Apostles. They placed the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ in the very centre of their message. This actually shows us how to lead primitive people to a further stage in their religious experience. In such a situation, at an Easter festival, I preached about the Resurrection of Christ—which I had already done before—and finished the sermon by saying that the Lord will also raise us up, when He returns to judge all men. The effect was astonishing. Even the old men asked, "What shall we do to be saved?" For the first time their life, their salvation, had a new object: eternal bliss. But now their sins stood in the way. It was essential that their sins should be forgiven. This was the moment when the word from the Cross was understood as the message of God's mercy. Now they knew that we cannot save ourselves, but that God in His mercy has saved us. If I see the matter aright, then, the Christian message to primitive people takes the form of an ellipse, whose two focal points are the Creation and the Resurrection and Advent of Christ, but at the point where the lines intersect stands the Cross.

#### IV

When we now turn to the last question—how can the life of the people be permeated with the spirit of the Gospel?—the paradoxical reply is: through individual decisions. Quite apart

from the fact that the Gospel is always forcing primitive man to face the need for decision, God gives him two special opportunities of bearing witness: first of all, when the tribe is awakened and the members who have been convinced are baptized. In the case of the conversion of a whole tribe, individuals come forward and win more and more of their fellow-tribesmen through the power of their own conviction, until finally the majority are on their side. The conversion of the tribe is therefore preceded by the conversion of the individual. But as there will always be some people who only take part in the tribal conversion because they go with the stream, the individual is again faced by a decision when he is baptized. This is where the really convinced members of the tribe stand out from the rest. The conversion of a tribe never results in mass baptisms, but in the founding of a Christian Church within the tribe. However great may be the power of baptism to draw people together into a community, it must nevertheless be preceded by individual conviction. This is especially the case where baptism is preceded (as used to be the custom in the early centuries) by thorough instruction and by a private confession of sin. Before baptism everyone confesses his sins personally, and receives personal forgiveness. At baptism he personally renounces the devil and all his works, and is received into God's Covenant of grace by receiving a new name. The whole group of people who have been personally called forth from the tribe forms the Church. It is their task to impregnate their tribe with the Gospel. Secondly, the Church influences the life of the tribe by the mere fact of its existence, since it is like a city set on a hill. If the tribe has been converted, the members of the Church become the leading personalities in the life of the tribe. And those who have not been baptized imitate the habits of the church members. It is the Church which determines and fixes customs and laws, on the basis of its Christian judgment, in agreement with the people. It sees that the decisions are carried out. The conscience of the Church can only remain alert if it can take action as an independent body, and if its decisions are also recognized by the missionary.

The dynamic power of the Church can only develop when the Christian message is part of the life of the people. It is not a question of introducing strange customs, but of purifying those that already exist and of deriving them from God's purpose in



Creation. This can only be done by the Church. For instance, the members of the clan remain attached to one another, but the clan no longer acts according to the principle: "Everything is good that serves the purpose of the clan," but according to the commandment to love one's neighbour, which includes all men. Marriage is preserved, but for the sake of God it becomes monogamy, based on loyalty, in which the woman is regarded equally as the child of God, and therefore has the same rights as the man. So every sphere of life is placed under the judgment of the Word, and emerges in a new form, just like the individual. Through the Church the Christian message becomes the order of life for the people.

Thus the Church can only exercise a dynamic influence on the people if it is itself constantly struggling against evil, and training its own members to be pure in their own hearts. Its missionary power varies in proportion to its self-discipline. So long as the life of the Church is in order, the pagan members of the tribe feel a great longing to be permitted to join it. But if the life of the Church is hollow and insincere, its message will have no meaning for the life of the people. It is fairly easy to carry out this discipline in a Church in a primitive tribe. The sense of mutual obligation and responsibility, which is already present in the tribe, comes to full fruition when it is filled with power from the Word of God. The tribe of God has come to birth. All Christians therefore in the New Guinea Church do pastoral work. Lukewarm Christians are visited and warned. If the admonitions of individuals are not effective, these Christians are then brought before the village church or the church of the district, which realizes its responsibility for every member. The unbaptized members of the tribe therefore realize again and again how earnestly God seeks for every individual soul, through the Church. Sins of the individual are regarded as sins of the community. The community purifies itself by admonishing the sinner publicly in its religious services, and if necessary, by expelling him. The community as a whole repents with him. If the sinner repents, the Church rejoices that it can accord him forgiveness. Unbaptized members of the tribe are treated according to the reformed native law, which is influenced by the Gospel. Pagans are deeply impressed by this struggle against sin.

In addition to discipline, there is the missionary service of the

Church. Where missionary work has been rightly carried out, this "native evangelism" will seem perfectly natural. Mass movements only occur if the pagans who have heard the Word pass it on to their fellow-tribesmen as a matter of course. This impulse to bear witness should not be hindered because it is "unofficial". Once a Christian Church has come to birth, it must be consciously tended and fostered. The individual members have ample opportunity to proclaim the Word of God to their fellow-tribesmen. They can do so in the midst of their ordinary life, but also in church services. In New Guinea all Christians are free to speak in church services. The communal morning and evening services in the villages, which all the members of the tribe attend, are conducted by the Christians in turn. The congregation takes part in the sermon by question and answer. The sermon may also be amplified by individual Christians. After the services the Christians often discuss for a long time how to apply what they have heard to the life of the community. This produces a common desire for a purer community life which influences the whole people.

An important method of evangelism, and of permeating the life of the people with the Gospel, is the school, for which the Church has the full responsibility. Its main service is to educate the people, and especially the young, in the Christian way of life. How seriously this task is regarded in New Guinea may be seen in the fact that, in villages or communities where the school is not properly attended, the local churches forbid the baptism of children. It is then quite clear that children may only be baptized if they are going to be brought up as Christians. But the Church is also called to work among those who are pure pagans. Where a mission to primitive people has understood that evangelism must be done by the members of the tribe itself, it has not only achieved its greatest successes, but the Christian Church itself then becomes truly "indigenous". This method will be all the more successful if missions avoid the old mistake of treating these mission-workers as their own "employees". They are working for the Church, and the Church therefore has to provide for their support. If the Church is given the opportunity, it will also gladly accept the spiritual responsibility which this involves. The more a church is allowed to fulfil its own tasks and to organize its own work, the greater is its joy in service and sacrifice. The churches in New Guinea do not receive any



money from the mission, although every native church has its own mission-field in which its men are working. In 1939 the Christians in New Guinea (some 45,000 in number) had over 800 mission-workers in their service. In connection with this mission-work it is evident that the more strongly the Church can support its mission-work and the nearer it is to it, the more effective that work becomes; and that the farther the mission-station is from the church, the more difficult it is to carry on the work. This is another proof of the responsibility of the Christian Church for the penetration of the whole life of the people with the Christian message.

In all this, however, we must take care to avoid the great danger by which the churches at home are faced. In the Christian sense there can never be a national church, which includes all the members of the nation. Once this takes place, the Church has lost its unique position. But we can try to Christianize the people through the Church, whose members will influence the rest of the community.

The many problems which arise—the problem of the second generation, or of the relation of Christians to their government (which is a particularly burning one among the natives of Africa)—cannot be developed at greater length here. The one thing that matters is always: decision for God. The more the Christian message has gained an influence over men's consciences, the easier it will be to attain this. The task of this paper is to show how this can be achieved.

## THE APPROACH TO ISRAEL

*Contributed by the French Committee of Witness to Israel*

ONLY blind optimism could have expected the Jewish tragedy to vanish at the end of the war with the Nazism which had forced it to the front of the stage. We know now that, here as elsewhere, the war settled nothing. On the contrary, although the position of the Jews to-day in Europe and the world is less tragic than it was in the years when every day threatened thousands with extermination, it is perhaps even more desperate, because all the hopes the survivors hugged have been cruelly dispelled. Except in some countries, including France, in which, although anti-semitism is certainly more active than before the war, it is not definite enough to forbid their existence—the Jews of Europe are living parked in the camps in which the Germans had concentrated them, or else they are being ill-treated by the liberated populations. But the evolution of Zionism is leading to an apparently insoluble dispute with Great Britain and ranging against Jewry even those who flew to arms against the totalitarian *régime* of their murderers.

The Church of Jesus Christ, which could not tolerate the Nazi persecution of the Jews, cannot remain indifferent to their present plight. Not that the Church needs to intervene in the political problem that the Jews want to settle in Palestine and that the British refuse to let them do so; but because the Church, as the “New Israel”, must not forget that it is bound up with Israel according to the flesh, whose name it has inherited. Karl Barth has just reminded us that “from the Christian point of view the most serious aspect of the nihilist revolution was the struggle against Israel and hence against the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God.”

It is not a question, therefore, of the Church adopting a position inspired by what unbelievers so easily call “Christian charity”, but of being bound to solidarity in its attitude and in its action. It is not a question of “pitying the Jews”, but of basing our Christian attitude and our Christian action on the certainty that our destiny is linked up with theirs.



First, our attitude; for our salvation and theirs is at stake. Persecution of the Jews condemns us, and indifference to the salvation of the Jews condemns us no less. The cry of Paul, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. ix, 16) includes, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, and throughout the history of the Church, preaching the Gospel to the *Jews*.

Then, our action, which should flow from this attitude. In our dealings with the Jews we must never weary of showing solidarity with them. The Church must not relax when the concentration camps are closed. Moreover, we must never let such action dispense us from the duty of preaching the Gospel. We must not reflect that conversions are considerably encouraged by the giving of relief; but neither must we admit for a moment that if the people relieved have a spiritual life which satisfies them and a magnificent religion, we should confine ourselves to helping them physically or morally.

On the contrary, we must remind ourselves of the appeal of Calvin, which was the outcome of his meditation on "The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments":

"Who then dares to represent the Jews as destitute of Christ, them with whom we are informed the evangelical covenant was made, of which Christ is the sole foundation? Who dares to represent them as strangers to the benefit of a free salvation, to whom we are informed the doctrine of the righteousness of faith was communicated?"<sup>1</sup>

Yet a religious newspaper, following upon a controversy between a Christian writer and a historian, recently published an article on the sources of Christian anti-semitism. There are passages of St. Thomas Aquinas and of Luther which are shocking on this point. But when Christian churchmen do not intend to be hostile, when they are dealing with the Mystery of Israel, their language is so technical that its meaning escapes not only the Jews whom they wish to address, and whom they unintentionally wound, but a whole mass of people who cannot understand them, and may interpret their writings as an encouragement for their own tendencies.

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, Book II, Chapter X, Section IV.

## THE BLOOD FALLS

However serious these verbal misunderstandings may be sometimes, they are not the only ones which must be avoided and put right. A Jew who has been stricken in body and soul by the trials of the last few years will tend to make no difference between an anti-semite like Hitler—who declared he was fulfilling the will of the Almighty by annihilating the Jews—and the men who explain, or even excuse, the persecutions by saying that they are God's answer to the cry of the Jewish people: "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii, 25). This notion of the blood falling on the heads of the Jews must be faced; we must not evade it in order to avoid wounding anyone's susceptibilities. We cannot prune the Word of God to meet the needs of evangelism.

Yes, the blood is falling. Yes, the Gospel says, "*All the people* said, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.'" And according to the interpretation given by the Old Testament, the blood falls as a punishment (see especially Joshua ii, 19). This seems to play into the hands of the religious and secular extremists who say to the Jews: "You asked for it! You are responsible for your own persecution!" Even the Church allows itself to be betrayed into extravagant language, interpretations and actions which condone or encourage persecution, and so to participate in it. The Jews then reply that this expression is found only in the Gospel of Matthew, who was the most anti-Jewish of the Synoptic writers, and they point out that Jesus was put to death by the Romans under the pressure of a powerful minority in one City: Jerusalem.

There would appear to be ground for the assertion on both sides. Yet, if the Bible is regarded as God's Word, both must be driven out of court and their strange blindness rebuked.

In our view, the curse was invoked in the name of the whole Jewish people, just as Pilate condemned Christ to death in the name of all Gentiles. But Jesus replied with a Word of blessing, valid for all Jews and all Gentiles: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii, 34).

This Word is for the whole Jewish People and for all men: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief" (unbelief which culminated in the crucifixion of His Son, for which both Jews and non-Jews are responsible) "that He might have mercy upon



all" (Rom. xi, 32). This mercy was manifested by His death, which was an act of redemption for all men.

Through that death the New Covenant was sealed in His blood. The blood which falls, then (in accordance with the Jews' invocation) is "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii, 24)—and this sprinkling exceeds the sprinkling made by Moses at the Pass-over (Heb. xi, 28) to which the Jews nevertheless owed their deliverance.

Peter, the Apostle of the Jews, preached nothing else to them at Jerusalem (see his sermons in Acts ii and iii) than their responsibility for the death of Jesus, in accordance with "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii, 23), although he knows "that they did it through ignorance, as did also their rulers" (Acts iii, 17). He added: "Unto you *first* God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts iii, 26).

There are two dominant affirmations in Peter's preaching which ought to form the basis of a message to the Jews to-day: "The promise is unto you" (Acts ii, 39) and "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts iv, 12).

#### "THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU"

Israel is a Chosen People, in virtue of God's own promise, and in order that that promise may be fulfilled. Upon this promise St. Paul took his stand when, at Antioch in Pisidia and elsewhere, he proclaimed in the synagogue Jesus "raised by God according to promise", raised up "in fulfilment of His promise" (Acts xiii). So the Gospel for the Jews should be able to stand simply on what the Old Testament says about them. It is always a matter of lifting the veil which Jesus Himself lifted at Emmaus, of explaining the Scriptures as the deacon Philip explained them to the Ethiopian eunuch.

But Israel has been unfaithful to this promise. In the Old Testament this unfaithfulness consists essentially in their refusal to recognize the One, True God, and to consecrate themselves to Him, i.e. in a form of idolatry. The punishment for this idolatry comes in the shape of the trials and sufferings God permits Israel to endure. But the Gentiles, who made them-

selves the instrument of this punishment, are in their turn condemned and overthrown for having attacked God's People.

The Church to-day must return to the attitude and the message of the prophets, for Israel, for the Jews, and for its own members. It is a message of repentance and of hope.

To the persecuted people, the Church must say that their sufferings are not God's vengeance for the death of Jesus, but an appeal to conversion and to turn from their unfaithfulness. It is obviously very hard to use this language to the survivors of the Nazi massacres. But Christians cannot attempt to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews unless they begin by affirming that Jesus really is the Christ, the Son of God, and that their unfaithfulness consists in their refusal to recognize Him as the Messiah foretold in the Prophets. In this connection, it is essential to explain the exact significance of the doctrine of the Trinity, which Orthodox Jews represent as the worship of several gods, and therefore as a betrayal of monotheism.

To the people who pray, "Blessed be His glorious Name for ever", Christians must say that this Name, which the Jews do not know, and which they represent by the sacred Tetragram, this Name which God refused to reveal to Moses (to whom He only said what He was)—this Name has been revealed in Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12):

To anti-semites, on the other hand, the Church must proclaim the judgment which is meted out to those who attack God's People. In no case can anti-semitism be justified by Israel's unfaithfulness; anti-semitism is always, in the last resort, self-righteous justice. Persecution of the Jews is always harmful to the Church, just as the unfaithfulness of the Jews is only the reflection of the unfaithfulness of Christians.

#### THE WALL OF SEPARATION

This then would be the basis for an organized campaign if the Jews were on their side a coherent body attached to their faith and worship: if there were not between most of them and the main body of Christians a mass of prejudices, sometimes justified, but generally due to the fact that they completely misunderstand one another. We must see how they can be cleared away.



In view of these prejudices, Christians should not reproach Jews for the mote which is in their eye, but give heed to the beam in their own. Above all they should not lose sight of the immemorial tradition of persecution which has developed defensive reflexes, quickened to acute sensitiveness by the horrors they have lived through during the Nazi régime. There are reproaches which we can no longer bring against them, even if we think them just; and searching examination is called for before we accept for ourselves the most legitimate. In particular all hope of a successful mission goes by the board if we start from the premise that Jews cannot be assimilated; and that is far from proof in the social, even if it is plausible in the theological world.

Moreover, we should not expect to overcome these prejudices apart from Christian faith. Rather, for Jewish converts and for the Christian in his approach to the unconverted, Christianity ought to get behind them, and they will collapse of themselves.

Anti-semitism is far more than one such prejudice. For anti-semitism, "to be or not to be" is the basic question in our relations with the Jews. It is essential that Jews and Christians should drive it out of the field in alliance, not with uncoordinated arguments on different fronts. So long as a Jew can suppose that Christians as a whole are anti-semitic, or that the Church does not fight anti-semitism in every shape and form, there will inevitably be a movement of repulsion, turning Jewish eyes away from the Gospel which their sincerest friends in the Church want to lay before them.

It follows that, unless we are to be at cross purposes, a clear distinction should be drawn between anti-semitism and the anti-Judaism which is involved in every summons to conversion, and concerns the Church too, for the Church has constant need of conversion and a constant tendency to Judaism. All suggestions that as a Christian one is really a Jew are special pleading. The aim of general conversion cannot be anything less than the spiritual destruction of Judaism. There we meet a "rock of offence", for the sincerest Jews regard themselves as a Remnant necessary for the preservation of the world and, in this world, of the Law of Sinai. But Christians, even when they tell them that the Remnant is unfaithful, cannot forget that the preservation of Israel until the last days is one of God's mysteries.

To shrink from this anti-Judaism—whose eschatological quality certainly takes the edge off the reactions it is liable to

provoke—means admitting that there are Jews and Greeks within the Church, admitting that God (or at any rate His unfaithful Church) has respect of persons, and recognizing the possibility of separate Jewish-Christian churches.

Moreover, as long as the anti-semitism of certain Christian groups forces Missions to the Jews to contemplate the possibility of creating such communities, we may wonder who needs the Gospel first, and ask ourselves whether we are not putting the cart before the horse in accepting such a necessity. For if we do so the wall of separation is not broken down.

This is our message to the people which is not like other peoples, which suffers even while it glories in its separation: the wall is broken down. It has been broken down in Jesus Christ.

“ NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER ”

There is none other name whereby we may be saved; nor whereby they may be saved.

In fact, the problem of the attitude to adopt towards the Jews and of the efforts to convert them, all comes back to the general problem of converting the world, and of the Christian life. “ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature ” (Gal. vi, 15).

Nevertheless we meet different reactions among converted Jews, and so among those we hope to convert. These differences make it essential to vary the message which is to be addressed to them.

Some have come to the Gospel because they have seen in it the fulfilment of the message spoken by the Prophets. Most of the Jews who have come from Liberal Judaism are naturally among these. To them the Christian message must make it clear that Jesus Christ is not “ one of the prophets ”, nor even the greatest of the prophets. Otherwise we shall be acquiescing in their changing over from a Liberal Judaism to an equally (or still more) Liberal Christianity which is disloyal to the Lordship and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. That Jesus was one of the prophets was, as we know, just what even the Jews who had Him crucified were ready to accept.

Some Jews have come to the Gospel, or may do so, from a break, spiritual or social, with their old world. They often fall into a dualism, opposing the vengeful God of the Old Testament



to the Gospel's God of Love. They refuse to recognize any Christological meaning in their scriptures, which they discard. They find themselves in agreement on this point with many Gentile converts and many who have been brought up as Christians.

Some Jews brought up on the Jewish scriptures are in the same position as the first disciples at Emmaus and the Ethiopian eunuch; they confess that the real meaning is revealed to them and see how the Law is fulfilled. These above all should be encouraged. But to all the others, even if we begin by coming down to their level because "children need milk", we must in the end without fail preach this real Gospel.

Their very silence will remind us that this message of the Cross fulfilling the Law is a stumbling-block to the Jews (1 Cor. i, 23). What was true in the first days of the Church (even for Peter, the first confessor) is always true. That explains the two varieties—the over-simple fulfilment and the complete break-away—which we have already reviewed. But we have no other message.

Still, it was this very stumbling-block in which the Jew, Paul, and the Jewish apostles believed, and which they preached. The Jews must be made to realize that they are the pivot of the salvation brought by the Messiah of Israel, the King of the Jews, which was addressed first to Jews, and received first by Jews. It was Jews, it was Peter, who were the first to reply to the vital question: "Whom say ye that I am?" (even if they did not yet accept the scandal of His death and resurrection): "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. xvi, 16).

We must then bring it home to the Jews that not only the Old Testament, but also the gospels and the epistles, are *Jewish scriptures*, and that it is these Jewish scriptures in which we Christians believe. There again, for all men, salvation is of the Jews.

Finally there is the largest group, the Jews who are completely indifferent to their traditional beliefs. Among these we must again distinguish between those who hardly realize that they are Jews, or do not admit that being Jewish implies a real difference and separation, and those Jews who insist on their own special position—their race—without basing themselves upon any spiritual reality: the indifferent and the Zionists, to make a rather arbitrary distinction.

The first thing which we must say to the Zionists is that the salvation of the Jews, and their personal salvation as Jews, lies not in Zionism but in their Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the most difficult, if not the most repellent, thing that could be said to them from the human point of view; because by faith alone comes conviction.

To the oppressed in the depth of their distress, the prophets announce that God has not abandoned His People, and that He will provide for their salvation. It is of their salvation, and not of any material advantage, that we must to-day speak to the Jews, including the Zionists.

While men are crying out that God is dead, the world is a prey to systems which claim to bring temporal security, and which all result in slavery or despair. Communism, Nazism and the existentialism of Sartre all attempt to save man from his chains, which grow heavier and heavier. Nationalism, too, is, for Jews, a desperate attempt of men who hope to save themselves by material means.

The Church cannot avert her eyes from the significance of Zionism for Israel, the world, and the Church herself. But she must also declare to Jews, as well as to communists, existentialists and internationalists that there is no salvation in any other than Jesus Christ.

There still remain the indifferent, who are undoubtedly the most numerous. It is hard to know whether the best course is to remind them of their double infidelity: the general infidelity of Judaism first, which has failed to recognize its Lord and Saviour, and then their infidelity to Judaism; or whether we should not simply speak to them in the same way as to any other paganized or post-Christian "Gentiles" in the modern world.

Though this analysis may appear to enter into details, it is still only an outline. In particular, it omits to take into account the different problems which arise according as our message is addressed to Western Jews or to refugees from the closed communities of Eastern Europe. It says nothing about the masses of opportunist converts, modern Moriscos, many of whom have only asked for baptism in the hope of escaping persecution. This should remind us that evangelization (of Jews as of all others) should not address classes of men, but individuals. For the call of God, which it can only echo or carry, is absolutely personal.



In fact we again discover that there can be no device or prescription for the evangelization of Israel, since the liberty of God's Word makes nonsense of our prescriptions, our devices, and the techniques of which we are so proud.

On the other hand, concern for the message to be preached to the Jews, like concern to meet the attacks which through them are directed against the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God, will always have the merit of making the Church take its stand on the unity of the biblical revelation and the indivisibility of the two Testaments.

The mode of presenting the Christian message may vary with the Jews with whom one is dealing: orthodox, liberal or non-practising; but the essence cannot vary. Certain preliminary conditions are, however, indispensable. First, the people who undertake this work must *love the Jews*, not *in spite of* the fact that they are Jews (because they are wretched) but *because* they are Jews (and wretched). The second condition, which follows from the first, is that they should know them and—more precisely—should know the extraordinary variety of the cases with which they may have to deal.

Finally, we fully realize that all men's efforts will be vain unless God, through His Holy Spirit, enables those whom we wish to evangelize to respond to His grace. All efforts for evangelization should, therefore, begin with constant intercession. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x, 1).

# VII

## IS THERE A PROBLEM OF EVANGELISM?

THE repeated use of the phrase *the problem of evangelism* suggests a point at which our volume may meet with sharp criticism from certain quarters. There are Christians who hold that there is no such problem. The Christian Faith, they would say, is not a human contrivance but a divine revelation, given once for all in Jesus Christ; the Church has therefore nothing to do but proclaim continually the truth it has received, and all will be well. This statement, though true, is by its oversimplification essentially misleading.

The Gospel is the final Word of God to men. But revelation is not static; it has to be apprehended afresh in every generation, and the scribe instructed in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God is bidden to bring forth from his treasures things new and old. The Lord of the Church bids His people hearken to what the Spirit *saith* to the churches. The Bible is therefore also the contemporary utterance of God to His people, speaking to their condition through words which, though written long ago, have an inexhaustible power of renewal as the approach of the living God to man in his changing needs and situations. The Church lives both by the Word and by the Spirit; not by the Word without the Spirit (the way of scholasticism), nor by the Spirit without the Word (the way of illuminism). But the Church can live by both Word and Spirit only in so far as it is the listening Church, attentive and eager to hear the Word of God to-day.

To listen to the Word of God is not enough. The Church is called to listen also to the confused voices of men. There is a perpetual change of intellectual climate. Words change their meanings and their connotations. Problems which are of burning significance for one generation become marginal for the next. Its word must be to men, in their common speech, and in unmistakable relevance to their needs, both those needs of which they are conscious, and those to consciousness of which it may be that they need to be awakened. Evangelism is perpetually a task not only of proclamation but also of translation.



It is obvious that the task of evangelism has its perils. The Church, by loyal faithfulness to what it has received, may make its message meaningless. By excessive concern for the contemporary relevance of its utterance, it may be betrayed into unfaithfulness to the Gospel of God's judgment and God's mercy. But to say that a path is perilous is not the same as to say that it is not the path appointed by God for His Church to follow. The problem of evangelism is just the perpetual rediscovery of the narrow way on which alone the Church can be faithful to its twofold vocation of faithfulness to God and service to His creatures.

#### HAS THE CHURCH FAILED?

As churchmen, we believe in the Church as the Bride of Christ, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Yet we are confronted by grim and disturbing realities. In almost every country of what was once called Christendom, the Church is losing ground.

Why is this? Is it because of the growth of anti-Christian forces? There have always been such in the world. Is it due to persecution? The past and the present give evidence that persecution can revive the Church. It can continue to be a living Church only if it sets itself consciously and deliberately to live every day in dependence on its living Lord and on nothing else. A Church well settled and established tends almost inevitably to rely on the permanence of the *status quo*. And, where it is prosperous and at peace, it tends to forget that its task is always evangelistic and can be nothing else. Conformity, even sincere and devout conformity, is not faith. The Church has too much accepted as its purpose something other than that single purpose by which it is God's will that it should live—the bringing of every man individually under the judgment of God in order that every man individually may become partaker of the salvation wrought once for all by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is to be gained by frequent public confessions of guilt and failure on the part of the Church. But a sober and well-founded recognition of failure is a necessary preliminary to recovery. The Church is not dead, and the feeling that the Gospel no longer has anything to say to modern man is baseless. The evidence assembled in Section V points in another direction. Yet these new experiments in evangelism are only stars in a very

dark sky. The world at large regards Christianity and its message as definitely belonging to the past. The problem of evangelism is how to awaken in modern man a consciousness of the perennial relevance of the Gospel.

#### EVANGELISM AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The weakness and limited success of contemporary evangelistic effort raises in an acute form the question of the continuing divisions of the Christian churches and the acquiescence of the vast majority of Christians in them. The only valid argument for the union of the churches is theological, a belief that unity is the will of God for His Church, and that the Church as the Body of Christ ought to represent on earth the mysterious unity of the Godhead. Can we afford, as things are, to continue divided? Is not fellowship in evangelism one of the points at which we can realize our unity in the essential oneness of the Gospel, and so grow towards fuller fellowship in church life and organization?

Most of the efforts chronicled in these pages are the isolated enterprises of single churches. All the more important for this reason are the attempts which have been made to join the Christian forces, either permanently or for one single, large-scale evangelistic adventure.

This is the significance of the so-called Commando Campaign in London during the year 1946. The enterprise was Methodist in origin and inspiration, but clergy and workers of many denominations took part in this well-planned and carefully prepared attempt to stir the whole of London with the consciousness of the Gospel as a living force. It is too soon, perhaps, to assess the lasting effects of the Campaign. It is certain that in many places access was found to large bodies of men and women ordinarily out of touch with any form of Christian witness. Many clergy and congregations were roused to new hope and activity.

But in fairness, the opposite side of the picture has also been presented. Those who hold a strongly sacramental and corporate view of the Church and its life do find it difficult to work in fellowship with those whose emphasis is more on individual conversion. And what is to happen when people are converted and wish to enter the fellowship of the Church? To which body are



they to give their allegiance? This is a problem which has long perplexed all inter-denominational missions. To face the problem frankly is not to despair of the solution. Fellowship in evangelism may not result in solving the problem of solution, but it certainly will foster an acute consciousness of the scandal of division.

#### WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

At what point can evangelism be said to be effective? In setting forth the various experiments which have come under our notice, we have attempted to deal with them critically and objectively. In order not to delude ourselves into false imaginings, we must be aware that no evangelism is effective, however impressive may have been its manifestations at the time, unless its results are permanent. The meaning of permanence may be considered in three connections:

##### 1. *Evangelism and Church*

Belief in Christ is imperfect, unless it includes recognition of the obligation of membership in His visible body, the Church. To many who have come to love and trust in Christ, this is a severe test; the Church as it manifests itself in many places is so unattractive, its fellowship so cold and uninviting, that it is hard to believe in the reality of its connection with the Gospel of life. Yet to admit that there can be any separation between the Lord and His Body is a fatal abandonment of New Testament Christianity. Allegiance to Him must mean acceptance of the Church, whatever its weakness or unattractiveness may be.

Even among Christians there is a tendency to underestimate the importance of the Church and its ordinances. At their best, these outward things are means of grace; at their worst, they are the divinely appointed instruments for that continuity of the Church in time without which the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be assured. Unless the Church is utterly apostate, we must take hold of the fact that it has within itself the possibility of renewal through Word and Sacrament.

##### 2. *Evangelism and Society*

The purpose of evangelism is not the redemption of human

society; but unless the Christian fellowship is a redemptive influence in society, it may be taken as certain that it has failed to apprehend the fulness of the Gospel. If a man is brought into living fellowship with Christ, his whole relationship to God undergoes that change expressed by St. Paul in the classic phrase *Thou art no more a servant but a son*. But with this changed relationship to God must go a new relationship not only to the other members of the Christian group but to all men generally. The world is too often content with the attitude of Cain, *Am I my brother's keeper?* For the Christian, such cynicism is impossible; he knows, if he has understood the Gospel at all, that he is responsible for the welfare of all men.

In his family, and in his place of work, the Christian must be known as a model of integrity, consideration for others and willingness to serve. He must stand courageously for what is right, regardless of his own interests. In society, the Christian group must be known to stand for the common well-being of all, for that sense of obligation to all men which springs from belief in God as Creator and in Christ, Who is the King of all spheres of life.

The extent to which an individual or a Christian group can affect the environment is conditioned by many factors outside the Christian life. But recent history has shown with startling clarity the results which can be achieved by a small but determined minority. The withdrawal of the Christian group into itself, so that it appears at best as a mutual assurance society, is a denial of the vocation assigned to it by its master to be the light of the world, the leaven that leaveneth the lump. The world in passing its judgment on the Church is perfectly entitled to turn against it the word of the Master Himself: *By their fruits, you shall know them*.

### 3. *Evangelism and Witness*

If a man is a true Christian, he does not need to be stimulated to win others for Christ, though his zeal may need to be corrected by the wider experience of those who have gone further than he in the Christian way. Every true Christian understands from within the meaning of St. Paul's "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel". The treasure he has found hidden in the field is so immense that it is impossible for him to keep it to himself. The lay apostolate is the hope of the Church in the modern world.



It stands to reason at any time that only a very small fraction of the Church's evangelistic work can be done by the paid servants of the Church. If a study were made of the human instruments by whom men have been won for Christ, it would probably be found that comparatively few had been won by the clergy, and that far more had been brought in by their own parents, or by their companions in work, than by any other means.

The work of the lay apostolate is one in which every Christian, however simple, can take part. The heart of it is the ministry of intercessory prayer, the ceaseless pleading for individuals before God. The second element is the living before the eyes of men in their ordinary places of resort of an unmistakably Christian life. The third is a quite new way, *vid.* to find out patiently how in this modern world the Christian view of life can be brought to bear on the various spheres of life in which the member of the Church fulfils his vocation.

In this modern world with so many conflicting "gospels", there is often a great uncertainty amongst church members about what they have to proclaim. In order to exercise its evangelistic task properly, the Church will have to find ways in order to enable her members to give a relevant witness in word and deed.

At certain great crises, the uncertainties of Christians yield before the demands of a situation in which circumstances force on the Church the choice between life and death. In the struggle of the German Church, some of the issues of the Gospel stood out in stark clarity. Is Jesus the only Lord of the Church, or has it any other? If it is claimed that He is the only Lord, Who then is this Jesus, Who makes such uncompromising claims, and will not tolerate any division of allegiance among His followers? In face of this challenge, the Word of God awoke. The questions of the hour and the answers to them were proclaimed from the pulpits and found an echo in the hearts of the hearers.

The Church is always in a state of crisis. Its conflict is always against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world. Sometimes these powers seem to sleep; but in reality they are always active, malevolent and destructive, never more dangerous than when they seem to sleep. Real evangelism means that the Church in all its ranks is constantly aware of the ever-present crisis.

The Gospel does not promise to the Church what, measured

by human standards, can be called success. It does give the assurance that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth, and that this power will never wear out. It does lay upon the Church an inescapable duty to preach the Gospel to all men to the end of time. When the message of redemption is preached, humbly but with burning conviction, and lived out, it will not fail to find a hearing. Those who hear with faith may be few. But God keeps the issues of the world's history in His own hands; His working is mysterious, and much of it lies out of the sight of men. If the Church is faithful to its task, it may be sure that God will not allow anything of its love, its service to be wasted, but will use it all for the establishment of His Kingdom. The Church must live always by faith, not by sight. But faith is not a second best. It is the human aspect of the faithfulness of the unchangeable God, and has always in it the divine promise. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. According to your faith be it unto you.



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OF ASSEMBLY COMMISSION II

ON

“ THE CHURCH’S WITNESS TO GOD’S DESIGN ”

*(The list includes those members of the Commission who were appointed before the end of 1947 and who therefore were able to participate in the preparation of the volume.)*

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THE MESSAGE  
OF THE ASSEMBLY  
AND THE  
REPORT OF  
SECTION II





# FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

## MESSAGE

**T**HE World Council of Churches, meeting at Amsterdam, sends this message of greeting to all who are in Christ, and to all who are willing to hear.

We bless God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ Who gathers together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad. He has brought us here together at Amsterdam. We are one in acknowledging Him as our God and Saviour. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us His own, and He is not divided. In seeking Him we find one another. Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together. We call upon Christian congregations everywhere to endorse and fulfil this covenant in their relations one with another. In thankfulness to God we commit the future to Him.

When we look to Christ, we see the world as it is—His world, to which He came and for which He died. It is filled both with great hopes and also with disillusionment and despair. Some nations are rejoicing in new freedom and power, some are bitter because freedom is denied them, some are paralysed by division, and everywhere there is an undertone of fear. There are millions who are hungry, millions who have no home, no country and no hope. Over all mankind hangs the peril of total war. We have to accept God's judgment upon us for our share in the world's guilt. Often we have tried to serve God and mammon, put other loyalties before loyalty to Christ, confused the Gospel with our own economic or national or racial interests, and feared war more than we have hated it. As we have talked with each other here, we have begun to understand how our separation has prevented us from receiving correction from one another in Christ. And because we lacked this correction, the world has often heard from us not the Word of God but the words of men.

But there is a word of God for our world. It is that the world is in the hands of the living God, Whose will for it is wholly

good; that in Christ Jesus, His incarnate Word, Who lived and died and rose from the dead, God has broken the power of evil once for all, and opened for everyone the gate into freedom and joy in the Holy Spirit; that the final judgment on all human history and on every human deed is the judgment of the merciful Christ; and that the end of history will be the triumph of His Kingdom, where alone we shall understand how much God has loved the world. This is God's unchanging Word to the world. Millions of our fellow-men have never heard it. As we are met here from many lands, we pray God to stir up His whole Church to make this Gospel known to the whole world, and to call on all men to believe in Christ, to live in His love and to hope for His coming.

Our coming together to form a World Council will be vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves to the Lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together, where they live, to be His witnesses and servants among their neighbours. We have to remind ourselves and all men that God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the humble and meek. We have to learn afresh together to speak boldly in Christ's name both to those in power and to the people, to oppose terror, cruelty and race discrimination, to stand by the outcast, the prisoner and the refugee. We have to make of the Church in every place a voice for those who have no voice, and a home where every man will be at home. We have to learn afresh together what is the duty of the Christian man or woman in industry, in agriculture, in politics, in the professions and in the home. We have to ask God to teach us together to say No and to say Yes in truth. No, to all that flouts the love of Christ, to every system, every programme and every person that treats any man as though he were an irresponsible thing or a means of profit, to the defenders of injustice in the name of order, to those who sow the seeds of war or urge war as inevitable; Yes, to all that conforms to the love of Christ, to all who seek for justice, to the peacemakers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man, to all who—even without knowing it—look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It is not in man's power to banish sin and death from the earth, to create the unity of the Holy Catholic Church, to conquer the hosts of Satan. But it is within the power of God. He



has given us at Easter the certainty that His purpose will be accomplished. But, by our acts of obedience and faith, we can on earth set up signs which point to the coming victory. Till the day of that victory our lives are hid with Christ in God, and no earthly disillusion or distress or power of hell can separate us from Him. As those who wait in confidence and joy for their deliverance, let us give ourselves to those tasks which lie to our hands, and so set up signs that men may see.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.





## REPORT OF SECTION II

### THE CHURCH'S WITNESS TO GOD'S DESIGN

*Received unanimously by the Assembly and commended to the churches for their serious consideration and appropriate action*

#### I THE PURPOSE OF GOD

**T**HE purpose of God is to reconcile all men to Himself and to one another in Jesus Christ His Son. That purpose was made manifest in Jesus Christ—His incarnation, His ministry of service, His death on the Cross, His resurrection and ascension. It continues in the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the command to make disciples of all nations, and in the abiding presence of Christ with His Church. It looks forward to its consummation in the gathering together of all things in Christ. Much in that purpose is still hidden from us. Three things are perfectly plain:

All that we need to know concerning God's purpose is already revealed in Christ.

It is God's will that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all men everywhere.

God is pleased to use human obedience in the fulfilment of His purpose.

To the Church, then, is given the privilege of so making Christ known to men that each is confronted with the necessity of a personal decision, Yes or No. The Gospel is the expression both of God's love to man, and of His claim to man's obedience. In this lies the solemnity of the decision. Those who obey are delivered from the power of the world in which sin reigns, and already, in the fellowship of the children of God, have the experience of eternal life. Those who reject the love of God remain under His judgment and are in danger of sharing in the impending doom of the world that is passing away.

## II THE PRESENT SITUATION

Two world wars have shaken the structure of the world. Social and political convulsions rage everywhere. The mood of many swings between despair, frustration and blind indifference. The millions of Asia and Africa, filled with new hope, are determined to seize now the opportunity of shaping their own destiny. Mankind, so clearly called even by its own interests to live at peace, seems still rent by a fanaticism of mutual destruction.

The word *faith* has acquired a new context. For most men, it is now faith in the new society, now to be founded once for all, in which the "good life" will be realized. Even in the present-day confusion, there are still many who believe that man, by wise planning, can master his own situation. Such men are interested not in absolute truth, but in achievement. In face of many religions and philosophies, it is held that all truth is relative, and so the necessity of a costly personal decision is evaded.

A formidable obstacle to Christian faith is the conviction that it belongs definitely to a historical phase now past. To those who know little of it, it seems merely irrelevant. More thoughtful men, who hold that it enshrines some spiritual and cultural values, regard it as no longer honestly tenable as a system of belief. And yet there is an earnest desire for clearly formulated truth. The religions of Asia and Africa are being challenged and profoundly modified. In the period of transition, the minds of millions are more than usual open to the Gospel. But the tendency in these countries to press an ancient religion into service as one foundation for a politically homogeneous state already threatens the liberty of Christian action.

So the Church sees the World. What does the World see, or think it sees, when it looks at the Church?

It is a Church divided, and in its separated parts are often found hesitancy, complacency, or the desire to domineer.

It is a Church that has largely lost touch with the dominant realities of modern life, and still tries to meet the modern world with language and a technique that may have been appropriate two hundred years ago.

It is a Church that, by its failure to speak effectively on the



subject of war, has appeared impotent to deal with the realities of the human situation.

It is a Church accused by many of having been blind to the movement of God in history, of having sided with the vested interests of society and state, and of having failed to kindle the vision and to purify the wills of men in a changing world.

It is a Church under suspicion in many quarters of having used its missionary enterprise to further the foreign policies of states and the imperialistic designs of the powers of the West.

Much in this indictment may be untrue; but the Church is called to deep shame and penitence for its failure to manifest Jesus Christ to men as He really is. Yet the Church is still the Church of God, in which and in which alone He is pleased to reveal Himself and His redemptive purpose in Jesus Christ, in whom and in whom alone the renewal of man's life is possible.

It is a Church to which, through the upheavals of the modern world, God cries aloud and says, "Come let us reason together" (Isaiah i, 18).

It is a Church that is, to millions of faithful people, the place where they receive the grace of Christ and are given strength to live by the power of His victory.

It is a Church awaking to its great opportunity to enter as the minister of the redemption wrought by Christ into that world with which God has confronted us.

It is a Church that to-day desires to treat evangelism as the common task of all the churches, and transcends the traditional distinction between the so-called Christian and so-called non-Christian lands.

The present day is the beginning of a new epoch of missionary enterprise, calling for the pioneering spirit, and for the dedication of many lives to the service of the Gospel of God.

### III THE CHURCH'S TASK IN THE PRESENT DAY

The duty of the Church at such a time can be expressed simply in one sentence—it is required to be faithful to the Gospel and to realize more fully its own nature as the Church. But fulfillment of this duty involves a revolution in thought and practice.

### A. *Worship and Witness*

Worship and witness have sometimes been held in separation, but they belong inseparably together, as the fulfilment of the great command that men should love God and should love their neighbour as themselves.

When the ordinary man speaks of the Church, he thinks of a group of people worshipping in a building. By what that group is, the Church is judged. Effective witness becomes possible only as each worshipping group is so filled with the joy of the risen and living Lord that even the outsider becomes aware that, when the Church speaks, it speaks of real things.

But a worshipping group of individuals is not necessarily a community. It is essential that each group become a real fellowship, through acceptance by all of full Christian responsibility for mutual service, and by breaking down the barriers of race and class. It is intolerable that anyone should be excluded, because of his race or colour, from any Christian place of worship.

The world to-day is hungry for community. But to many it seems that the fellowship of the churches is much less satisfying than that which they find in their own secular or religious organizations and brotherhood. This cannot be put right, until the churches more recognizably bear the marks of the Lord Jesus, and cease to hinder others, by the poverty of the fellowship they offer, from coming to Him.

### B. *A People of God in the World*

The Church must find its way to the places where men really live. It must penetrate the alienated world from within, and make the minds of men familiar with the elementary realities of God, of sin and of purpose in life. This can be done partly through new ventures of self-identification by Christians with the life of that world, partly through Christians making the word of the Gospel heard in the places where decisions are made that affect the lives of men. It can be done fully only if, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church recovers the spirit of prophecy to discern the signs of the times, to see the purpose of God working in the immense movements and revolutions of the present age, and again to speak to the nations the word of God with authority.

### C. *The Ecumenical Sense*

Each Christian group must be conscious of the world-wide



fellowship of which it is a part. Each Sunday as it comes, is a reminder of the innumerable company throughout the world, who on that day are worshipping the same Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. It can attain to fulness of Christian life only as it accepts its place in the great purpose of God that all men shall be saved, and takes up the responsibility for prayer, service and sacrificial missionary enterprise involved in that acceptance.

#### IV MISSIONARY AND EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY

The evident demand of God in this situation is that the whole Church should set itself to the total task of winning the whole world for Christ.

##### A. *Lay Work and Witness*

This is the day of opportunity for the lay membership of the Church. The work of God requires that every member of the Church, ordained and lay, be an active witness. The layman has his duties in the Church in worship and stewardship. He is charged also with a task in the world outside. The most obvious sphere of witness is the home, the place in which the Church of the coming generation is to be built up. Some are called to special ministries of preaching or intercession. For most people the field of witness lies in the place where they do their daily work. The way in which they do their job or exercise their profession must be unmistakably Christian. But also they are called to bear courageously, as God gives the opportunity, that witness in word through which others are confronted with the challenge of the living Christ. Christian service is to be conceived in the widest possible terms. The variety of forms of witness is just the means by which God can make known the fulness of the Gospel as His answer to all the needs of mankind.

##### B. *Co-operation in Evangelism*

The churches may find a denominational framework too narrow for its work to-day. Most evangelistic work is carried out by denominational agencies in separation. In many situations this is the natural way. But there are places where the work can best be done through co-operation in evangelism. Many difficulties may have to be faced. It is important that the

constituent Churches of the World Council of Churches seek comity among themselves in all matters relating to evangelistic effort and to their respective spheres of responsibility. But it is God Himself who is showing us the inadequacy of those things to which we have been accustomed. The Churches are called to-day to be much more flexible in organization than in the past. They must deal with every situation in the light of the total task.

There are parts of the world where the Church is holding on under great difficulties; and where its liberty of action is restricted or denied. Its witness is carried out more by suffering than by preaching. Such churches rightly claim that within the fellowship of faith they shall be supported by the prayers and succour of every member of the world-wide Church.

In other areas, God has set new opportunities before the Church. Millions of people are ready to listen to the Gospel, and are already considering whether it is their only hope. Such areas should be considered the responsibility of the whole Church, and not only of those at present engaged in work in them; adequate resources in personnel and money should be made immediately available to the local churches, so that what needs to be done can be done effectively and without delay. The younger churches are crying out for the help of Christian colleagues from the West. Churches older and younger alike call urgently for the dedication of lives to the ordained ministry, and other full-time vocations of service to Christ in His Church.

### *C. The Problem of our Divisions*

If we take seriously our world-wide task, we are certain to be driven to think again of our divisions. Can we remain divided? St. Paul told his Corinthian converts that he could not give them solid food, because their divisions showed that they were still carnal. God gives the gift of His grace to churches even in their separation. We are persuaded that He has yet additional gifts to give to a Church united in accordance with His will. The pressure for corporate unity comes most strongly from the younger churches; the older manifest greater caution. The path to unity is always beset by many difficulties. But the ecumenical movement loses significance, unless all its constituent churches bear ceaselessly in mind the prayer of Christ "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also



may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xvii, 21), and are prepared to move forward, as God guides them, to further unity in Faith, in fellowship, at the table of the Lord, and in united proclamation of the word of life.

#### V "NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME"

As we have studied evangelism in its ecumenical setting we have been burdened by a sense of urgency. We have recaptured something of the spirit of the apostolic age, when the believers "went everywhere preaching the word". If the Gospel really is a matter of life and death, it seems intolerable that any human being now in the world should live out his life without ever having the chance to hear and receive it.

It is not within the power of man alone to create a new evangelistic movement. But the Holy Spirit is at work in men with men. In the past He has from time to time quickened the Church with power from on high. It is our earnest hope and prayer that He will do a mighty work in our day, giving the Church again wisdom and power rightly to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to men. We rejoice that the World Council of Churches has included evangelism in its programme of development. Already we are seeing signs of renewal and fresh life.

Now, not to-morrow, is the time to act. God does not wait for us to be perfect; He is willing to use very imperfect instruments. What matters is that the instrument should be available for His use. The results of our efforts are not in our hands but in His. But He has given us the assurance that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful", and that where that faithfulness is found, He is able "to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think".

NOTE: In this short statement, it has not been possible to indicate in any detail the new problems in evangelism that have to be solved, and the new methods of work that are available to the Church to-day. There is a great field of research open in such matters as the use of radio and television, and in the application to local conditions of principles generally agreed upon. We venture to refer readers to the preparatory volume of our section *The Church's Witness to God's Design*, and to the Report

of the Whitby Conference of the International Missionary Council *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church*, and to the printed volume of the speeches delivered at that Conference, in which will be found much fuller discussion both of principles and of applications, and evidence of the power of God at work in the world to-day.





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